HISTORICIZING MODERNISM

SAMUEL BECKETT AND CINEMA

ANTHONY PARASKEVA

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Samuel Beckett and Cinema

Historicizing Modernism

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Anthony Paraskeva

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Introduction

Beckett's *Film* fulfilled an ambition which dates back to 1936, when he wrote to Eisenstein as a 'serious cinéaste'[1] requesting admission to the Moscow State School of Cinematography. His study of writing about cinema that same year, including work by Eisenstein and Pudovkin, Rudolph Arnheim and the avant-garde film journal *Close Up* (1927–33),[2] also signals a desire to learn the practical aspects of filmmaking, and a continuing interest in the possibilities of 'a backwater […] for the two-dimensional silent film that had barely emerged from its rudiments when it was swamped'.[3] *Film* is silent, and it is set in 1929, a period which marked cinema's transition to synchronized sound; it was produced in 1964, on the cusp of Beckett's work as a director for stage and screen, and during the widespread revival of silent film in the period of cinema's modernist second wave.

This book will make a case for the fundamental importance of cinema, as distinct from other media such as painting, video art and radio, to Beckett's work for stage and screen.[4] Drawing on recently published letters, archival material and production notebooks, this is the first book-length study to explore Beckett's complex, informed, ambivalent relations with both first and second wave modernist cinema. I extend and enhance scholarship on Beckett's relation to silent film by situating his earliest formative period as a writer, when he attended the cinema regularly, within the modernist silent film culture of the late twenties,

[1] Beckett to Sergei Eisenstein, 2 March 1936, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, vol. 1: 1929–1940*, eds Martha Fehsenfeld and Lois More Overbeck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 317.

[2] James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), 226.

[3] Beckett to Thomas MacGreevy, 6 February 1936, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett,* vol. 1, 312.

[4] For studies on the influence of painting on Beckett's work, see for instance Lois Oppenheim, *The Painted Word: Samuel Beckett's Dialogue with Art* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), James Knowlson, *Images of Beckett* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2003) and David Lloyd, *Beckett's Thing: Painting and Theatre* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016); on video art, see Mark Nixon, 'Samuel Beckett: Video Artist', in eds Peter Fifield and Daniel Addyman, *Samuel Beckett: Debts and Legacies* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 177–190; on television, see Jonathan Bignell, *Beckett on Screen: The Television Plays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009); on radio, see *Radio Beckett: Musicality in the Radio Plays of Samuel Beckett* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2008).

which sought to resist the coming of the talkies, and which included figures such as Eisenstein, Artaud, Meyerhold and Chaplin. By examining striking parallels between particular film techniques and his own dramaturgical and cinematic methods, my study will show forth Beckett's engagement with silent cinema, including German expressionism, Hollywood comedy, Soviet cinema and French impressionism. The tendency of silent film modernism's investigation into the formal properties of the medium, cut short by the arrival of the talkies in 1928, is revived by second wave modernism between 1959 and 1975, a period which coincides with Beckett's first practical encounter with camera and editing technique, and his first experience as a director of his own work. This book also situates Beckett, for the first time, within the context of cinema's second wave of modernism, including figures such as Alain Resnais, Jean-Luc Godard, Marguerite Duras and Robert Bresson. Critical work on Beckett has comprehensively overlooked this crucial context, and this is surprising given Beckett's long-standing interest in cinema, the shared aesthetic principles and techniques between his work and some of the key films of the period, as well as the direct connections between Beckett's collaborators and the films of the modernist new wave.

Beckett did not write and direct for stage and screen in isolation, I will argue, but within the context of a culture of interconnected representations between film, theatre and literature. Beckett's theatre practice, from the beginning of his work as a director in the mid-sixties, belongs to a modernist tradition of hybrid interactions between theatre and cinema. After *Film,* and the film adaptation of *Comédie*, he begins to develop a directorial style which overturns conventional distinctions between the mechanical reproducibility, limited spatial perspectives and asynchronous sound of cinema, and the specific or contingent quality of the fluid theatrical event. While his theatrical work from *Play* onwards achieves an inflexible rigour of pre-determination, as though the performance aspired to the condition of a recording, his work for the screen begins to incorporate techniques of liveness and gesture ordinarily found in the theatre. Critical scholarship on Beckett's television, I will argue, excludes a full reckoning of the sustained influence of cinema on his work for the screen. The distinctions Beckett scholars have drawn between his film and television work, I will claim, are less important than the similarities of camera operation and editing. I resituate Beckett's work for television within the context of his own long-standing interest in cinema; what makes Beckett's television so distinct and anomalous, I will argue, is its resort to techniques active in the modernist cinema of the period. In this respect, I will break with the consensus in studies of

Beckett by referring to the individual works for television as 'films' rather than 'television plays'.

Allusions to a diverse range of films are steadily recurrent in Beckett's earliest prose fiction, critical writing and correspondence, indicating regular habits of film-going and a sharp awareness of the full range of imbricated movements, genres, institutional modes and practices which constituted the ambit of film culture in the twenties and thirties. References to Hollywood and modernist cinema appear in a variety of registers and rhetorics and animate the modes of irony, and the often satiric, parodic strategies of his earliest fiction and critical writing. Belacqua in *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* finds himself immersed in the heady Parisian atmosphere of 'concerts, cinemas, cocktails, theatres, aperitifs';[5] in *More Pricks than Kicks,* he passes a 'queue standing for the Palace Cinema',[6] and later, races off in a car with Ruby 'after much clutch-burning […] in Hollywood style'.[7] When Beckett lists a range of cultural events while planning an evening out in London in 1935 – 'Otway's Soldier's Fortune, T.S.E.'s Sweeney & the Ballets Jooss and a new Garbo Karenina' – he expresses a preference for the Garbo film: 'Perhaps the last might be managed.'[8] In *More Pricks*, Belacqua sees a hatless woman walking slowly towards him in a bar, in Garboesque close-up:

> But her face, ah her face, was what Belacqua had rather refer to as her countenance, it was so full of light. This she lifted up upon him and no error. Brimful of light and serene, serenissime, it bore no trace of suffering, and in this alone it might be said to be a notable face […] The features were null, only luminous, impassive and secure […] An act of expression, he said, a wreathing or wrinkling, could only have had the effect of a dimmer on a headlight.[9]

The lightness and serenity of the face and the impassive act of expression evoke the luminous otherworldliness of a Garbo close-up. For H.D., writing in *Close Up*, her face in Pabst's *Joyless St* (1924) is marked by its 'chiselled purity, its dazzling, almost unearthly beauty'; Garbo is less a personality, according to H.D., but a 'symbol […] a glorified embodiment', a sentiment also echoed in Rudolph Arnheim's *Film*.[10] Amongst the 'arsenal of strange objects' belonging

[5] Samuel Beckett, *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* (Dublin: Black Cat Press, 1992), 37.
[6] Samuel Beckett, *More Pricks than Kicks* (London: Calder Publications, [1934] 1993), 43.
[7] Ibid., 97.
[8] Beckett to Thomas McGreevy, 8 October 1935, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett,* vol. 1, 284.
[9] Beckett, *More Pricks than Kicks*, 47.
[10] Rudolph Arnheim, *Film*, trans. L.M. Skieveking and Ian F.D. Morrow (London: Faber and Faber, 1933), 182–185.

to Lord Gall in *Echo's Bones*, Belacqua notices a 'full packet of photographs of Fraulein Dietrich';[11] the Marlene Dietrich persona is also summoned in *Echo's Bones* in the figure of the 'fully grown androgyne of tempestuous loveliness'.[12] In a letter in *More Pricks*, Smeraldina regales Belacqua about Pudovkin's *Storm Over Asia* (1928):

> I was at a grand Film last night, first of all there wasent any of the usual hugging and kissing, I think I have never enjoyed or felt so sad at a Film as at that one, Sturm uber Asien, if it comes to Dublin you must go and see it, the same Regie as Der Lebende Leichnam, it was realey something quite diffrent from all other Films, nothing to do with Love (as everybody understands the word) no silly girls makeing sweet faces, black lakes and grand Landschaften.[13]

The passage is revised from a section in *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, where she remarks, 'Sturm uber Asien, if it comes to Paris you must go and see it'.[14] The double reference to Pudovkin brings into focus Beckett's serious interest in Soviet cinema, an interest he shared with the writers of *Close Up*, who declared in an article on *Sturm uber Asien* (Storm Over Asia) that 'nothing greater has yet been made'.[15] In his study of *Close Up,* Beckett would have discovered a film culture in which distinctions between Hollywood and the avant-garde were not overtly pronounced. Articles on the Hollywood films of Alfred Hitchcock, Victor Seastrom, Eric Von Stroheim, Charlie Chaplin, the Marx Brothers, Joseph Von Sternberg, Ernst Lubitsch, D.W. Griffith, Buster Keaton and Greta Garbo were published alongside discussions of the various movements which constituted European film modernism: the Soviet cinema of Eisenstein and Pudovkin, the German expressionism of G.W. Pabst, Fritz Lang and Robert Wiene, the French impressionism of Germaine Dulac, Louis Delluc, Marcel L'Herbier, Jean Epstein and Abel Gance, the dadaism of René Clair and Francis Picabia, the abstract films of Man Ray and Hans Richter and the documentaries of Robert Flaherty. *Close Up* sought to establish a canon which testified to the convergence of both Hollywood and European traditions, and belonged to a wider cultural milieux – the backdrop to Beckett's formative period as a writer – in which the boundaries between genres and institutional modes were crossed and re-crossed. The expressionists, for instance, drew on Hollywood melodrama just as the surrealists embraced silent comedy. Beckett's

[11] Samuel Beckett, *Echo's Bones*, ed. Mark Nixon (London: Faber and Faber, 2014), 19.
[12] Ibid., 12.
[13] Beckett, *More Pricks than Kicks*, 163.
[14] Beckett, *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, 56.
[15] Kenneth Macpherson, 'As Is', *Close Up*, 4.1 (January 1929), 8.

deep fondness for Hollywood comedy – Laurel and Hardy, Keaton, Chaplin, the Marx Brothers – is well documented; according to James Knowlson, he was also 'very familiar with Expressionist and Surrealist cinema'.[16]

Beckett's interests in surrealism were primarily poetic: in 1932, he translated twenty-one poems and essays for the surrealist edition of the magazine *Quarter,* edited by Andre Breton. But his letters also suggest an alertness to interrelated developments in film: 'It was pleasant to hear the Paris news, what films were on and the latest 10% of Surrealisme.'[17] Experiments in photography and film were often aspects of a joint enterprise for the surrealists. The surrealist poet Robert Desnos inspired Man Ray's *L'Etoile de Mer* (1928); Philippe Soupault, one of the founders of surrealism, along with Breton, as Susan Mccabe points out, 'created multiple "cinematographic poems" filmed by Walter Ruttmann';[18] Apollinaire, whose 1912 poem 'Zone' Beckett translated, wrote an article in 1916 claiming that the cinema was the modern equivalent of the epic poem; Max Jacob's 'Printemps et cinématographe melés' delineates an evening at the cinema, assembling a collage of scenes from Hollywood melodramas. As James Naremore notes, 'Breton and his associates would pop briefly in and out of movie theaters and write lyrical essays about their experiences, developing what Louis Aragon called a "synthetic" or tangential criticism, which was designed to extract latent, chiefly libidinal meanings from single images or short sequences'.[19] Hollywood genre films, in particular, offered the surrealists a repertoire of means to extend and enhance their principles of free association, displacement and dissociative juxtaposition. Hollywood slapstick, with its disregard for logic and social codes, provides a frame or context of structure for the narrative procedures in Buñuel and Dali's *Un Chien Andalou* (1929). Beckett and Buñuel both contributed to the surrealist edition of Edward Titus' journal *This Quarter* (September 1932), an edition which published the script of *Un Chien Andalou* alongside Beckett's translations of Rene Crevel, Paul Eluard and Andre Breton. As Enoch Brater suggests, the opening shot of Keaton's eye in *Film* contains an 'oblique reference' to the young woman's eyeball sliced open in Buñuel and Dali's *Un Chien Andalou* (1929).[20]

[16] Knowlson, *Images of Beckett*, 91.

[17] Beckett to Thomas McGreevy, 9 October 1933, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 1, 166.

[18] Susan Mccabe, *Cinematic Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 8.

[19] James Naremore, *More Than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1998), 18.

[20] Enoch Brater, *Beyond Minimalism: Beckett's Late Style in the Theater* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 76. Brater also notes that 'Winnie stuck up to her "diddies" and then up to her neck in a mound of earth in *Happy Days* resembles the figures similarly planted in the final moments of *Un Chien Andalou*'.

During his time in Germany in 1936–37, Beckett's German diaries indicate that he frequently visited the cinema. Alongside his intense absorption in German expressionist painters such as Kandinsky, Kirchner and Feininger, the diaries suggest an ongoing parallel interest in expressionist film; although he found the films made during the Third Reich reprehensible, he remained curious about the legacies of expressionism and the afterlife of UFA, one of the world's great film studios in the Weimar period, though long past its prime in the mid-thirties: 'The new Ufa & Tobis films are indescribably bad.'[21] The diaries signal a cinéaste's awareness of the formal and stylistic motifs of expressionism. After a walk under the River Elbe in Hamburg, a diary entry dated 4 November 1936 describes 'german expressionist film screw stairs. Whole thing somehow kinematic'.[22] The 'screw stairs' evoke the production design of Fritz Lang's *M* – a film Beckett had seen and admired[23] – in a scene when a distraught mother, anxiously awaiting the return of her missing child, looks down a spiralling stairwell, or the oblique angles of *Das Kabinet des Dr Caligari* (1919), with its famous tilting houses, narrow spiralling streets and stairs. The 'screw stairs' in both were aspects of an aesthetic which sought to express the mental dissociations and physical disturbances of the characters in jagged, angular set designs. Ulrike Maude notes a possible relation between the pathologies, repetitions and motor disturbances, for instance, of V's obsessional pacing in *Footfalls*, or the rocking of W in *Rockaby*, and the somnambulistic bodies of expressionist film in general.[24] Beckett also directly alludes to *Caligari*, I would argue, in a section in *Murphy*. His great admiration for Werner Krauss, the actor who played Dr Caligari, his most famous role, strongly suggests he had seen the film: 'Krauss is a great actor, the best I have seen. I had only seen him in films before.'[25]

Caligari begins with a prologue introducing the film's protagonist, Francis, who narrates in flashback the story of Caligari, an insane tyrant hypnotist, and Cesare, a somnambulist who commits murders under Caligari's spell; but in the film's twist ending revelation, Francis is in fact an asylum inmate, Caligari is the asylum's director, and the flashback is the recollection of a madman. In the opening shot of the epilogue, a tableau of the asylum strikingly resembles

[21] Beckett to Mary Manning Howe, 18 January 1937, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 1, 423.

[22] Samuel Beckett, 3 November 1936, 'Transcript of German Diaries', JEK A/1/3/4, Beckett International Foundation: Reading University Library.

[23] James Knowlson and John Pilling, *Frescoes of the Skull: The Later Prose and Drama of Samuel Beckett* (London: Calder Publications, 1979), 122.

[24] Ulrika Maude, 'Somnambulism, Amnesia and Fugue: Beckett and (Male) Hysteria', in eds Peter Fifield and David Addyman, *Samuel Beckett: Debts and Legacies: New Critical Essays*, 153–176; 163.

[25] *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 1, 423.

the mise-en-scène of the patients at Magdalen Mental Mercyseat sanatorium in *Murphy*:

> Melancholics, motionless and brooding, holding their heads or bellies according to type. Paranoids, feverishly covering sheets of paper with complaints against their treatment or verbatim reports of their inner voice. A hebephrenic playing the piano intently. A hypomanic teaching slosh to a Korsakow's syndrome. An emaciated schizoid, petrified in a toppling attitude as though condemned to an eternal *tableau vivant*, his left hand rhetorically extended holding a cigarette half smoked and out, his right, quivering and rigid, pointing upward.[26]

The '*tableau vivant*' alludes to the visual style of *Caligari* and its frontally shot sequences of tableaux; the paranoids 'covering sheets of paper with complaints against their treatment' suggest Francis' paranoid fantasy of persecution by Caligari; the 'hebephrenic playing the piano' clearly resembles a sequence in the film where a woman mimes playing an imaginary piano, implying the piano in *Murphy* is not real but is rather an aspect of a schizoid delusion. The mirroring of Caligari's and Francis' actions, blurring distinctions between the ostensibly sane and the insane, echoes the scene with Murphy and Mr Endon, when Murphy stares at the catatonic Mr Endon, and sees himself reflected in Mr Endon's eye, 'a speck in Endon's unseen'.[27]

The tensions in *Murphy* between the conventions of realism and the Bildungsroman, and their dissolution into formlessness, between the reality of the unified self and its fragmentation and incoherence, are partly defined by summoning the formal context of cinema. Film in *Murphy* serves as a model to express both external reality and interior consciousness. Sunk in his reverie, Murphy comes to consciousness and sees 'Ticklepenny as though thrown on the silent screen by Griffith in midshot soft-focus sprawling on the bed'.[28] Here, the comparison with a scene in Griffith is employed to register the exterior scene. By contrast, Murphy imagines his consciousness 'projected, larval and dark, on the sky of that regrettable hour as on a screen, magnified and clarified into his own meaning […] a fragment of vitagraph'. The allusion here is to one of the earliest film companies in America, Vitagraph Studios, begun in 1897 when Albert E. Smith converted Thomas Edison's film projector into a camera. The idea of projection as a representation of consciousness had been a significant feature in film discourse since Hugo Münsterberg's *The Photoplay* (1916): what is distinct in cinema, Munsterberg claims, is its capacity to exhibit 'human

[26] Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (London: John Calder, [1938] 1993), 96.
[27] Ibid., 140.
[28] Ibid., 108.

actions […] the physical forms of space, time, and causality' in 'the forms of our own consciousness […] namely attention, memory, imagination, and emotion'.[29] After Murphy's encounter with Mr Endon, and his ensuing crisis of perception, when 'he could not get a picture in his mind of any creature he had met, animal or human',[30] his consciousness is again imagined cinematographically: 'Scraps of bodies, of landscapes, hands, eyes, lines and colours evoking nothing, rose and climbed out of sight before him, as though reeled upward off a spool.'[31] The movement here, from 'bodies' and 'landscapes', to close-ups of 'hands, eyes', which finally unspools into visual abstraction, 'lines and colours evoking nothing', resembles a characteristic sequence in the cinema of French impressionism.

Between 1918 and 1928, the impressionist movement in film, as David Bordwell argues, published some of the earliest film theory in film journals such as *Le Film* and *Cinéa,* established networks of ciné clubs, and generally played a dominant role in initiating the new modernist film culture.[32] Impressionist theory and practice, locating the essence of narrative cinema in the process of mind, developed a repertoire of visual devices which could show forth interiority as 'an alternative dimension of physical reality'.[33] One of impressionism's most important figures, as practitioner and theorist, was Jean Epstein: Beckett mentions seeing Epstein's *Finis Terrae* (1929) in a 1934 letter to Nuala Costello.[34] For filmmakers such as Epstein, Gance, Dulac and L'Herbier, cinema's potential lay in its representation 'not only of the external form of physical events and human actions but also the inner life and the mental processes of the characters' where 'mental states and processes appeared as a visual reality'.[35] Formal patterns and optical devices, including rhythmic, subjective editing, composite images, photogénic close-ups, extended dissolves and superimpositions, lens distortions and gauze focus, express the force of mental procedure and the pressure it exerts on narrative coherence. The close-ups of 'landscapes, hands, eyes, lines' in Murphy's unspooling mind suggest a sequence in an impressionist film which assembles close-ups of parts of bodies and rhymes them with other objects according to abstract semblance and patterns of line: 'hands, feet, clothing, hats, pipes, clocks, flowers, and other extremities

[29] Hugo Münsterberg, *The Film: A Psychological Study* (New York: Dover Publications, [1916] 1970), 3–5.
[30] Beckett, *Murphy,* 141.
[31] Ibid., 141.
[32] David Bordwell, *French Impressionist Cinema: Film Culture, Film Theory and Film Style* (New York: Arno Press, 1980).
[33] András Bálint Kovács, *Screening Modernism: European Art Cinema 1950–1980* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 19.
[34] Beckett to Nuala Costello, 10 May 1934, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 1, 207.
[35] Kovács, *Screening Modernism*, 19.

and objects'. As Rene Clair remarked of Gance's *La Roue* (1922): 'For me, the real subject of the film is not its curious plot, but a train, rails, signals, jets of steam, a mountain, snow and clouds.' In the final reel of Gance's masterpiece, *Napoléon* (1927), close-ups are rhythmically intercut with long shots across a three-screen triptych; multiple superimpositions and non-figurative shapes repeat and collide in a feverish torrent, showing forth the introceptive vision of Napoleon in front of the massed units of his soldiers, and eventually dissolving into pure abstraction and polyvisual stream-of-consciousness.

The process of Murphy's mind, as Chris Ackerley has argued, is elaborated by a confluence of implied contexts, including pre-socratic philosophy, Newton, Kant, Spinoza, Leibniz, Schopenhauer, Christian mysticism, Freud, Jung and recent psychology.[36] Ackerley does not mention cinema, though the interior flux of forms in chapter six resemble, I would suggest, an abstract film, for instance, by Moholy-Nagy, Eggeling, Ruttman or Man Ray. Sitting in his rocking chair, 'lapsed in body' so as to 'come alive in his mind',[37] like a spectator sitting in the darkness of the auditorium, Murphy's 'mental chamber […] pictured itself as a sphere full of light fading into dark'.[38] Its three zones, 'light, half light, dark',[39] conform to the Jungian division of mind into the 'perceptual conscious', the 'pre-conscious' and the 'unconscious';[40] the distinction between the first zone, the 'forms with parallel',[41] formed of images from the outside world 'available for new arrangement', and the third zone, the unconscious, 'a flux of forms, a perpetual coming together and falling asunder of forms', resembles the distinction between a representational film, with its images available for selective narrative or continuity editing, and a non-narrative abstract film, with its arrangements of shapes, patterns and movements. The third zone of Murphy's mind resonates with accounts of abstract film in *Close Up*: 'the geometric and dimensional variation of the successive various possible dimensions, proportions and designs';[42] the 'inventions of light-forms and movements'[43] in Man Ray's *Emak Bakia* (1926); the 'build up of pure forms'[44] in Eggeling's *Symphonie Diagonals*, and Richter's *Rhythmus*, in which 'light sweeps the screen slowly. The darkness of the screen expands and contracts.'[45]

[36] Ackerely, *Demented Particulars*, 116.
[37] Beckett, *Murphy*, 65.
[38] Ibid., 64.
[39] Ibid., 65.
[40] Ackerley, *Demented Particulars*, 125.
[41] Beckett, *Murphy*, 65.
[42] Sergei Eisenstein, 'The Dynamic Square', *Close Up,* 8.2 (June 1931), 94.
[43] Man Ray, 'Emak Bakia', *Close Up*, 2 (August 1927), 40.
[44] Roger Burford, 'From Abstract to Epic', *Close Up,* 2.3 (March 1928), 16.
[45] Oswald Blakeston, 'Light Rhythms', *Close Up*, 6.3 (March 1930).

Beckett's own ambitions to learn the craft of filmmaking, which he seriously considered while writing *Murphy*, enhanced and strengthened the texture of cinematic reference as an implied context in relation to Murphy's system of mental procedures. He completed the novel in June 1936; in January that year, he borrowed 'a lot of works on cinema from young [Niall] Montgomery, who is certainly a curious little card: Pudovkin, Arnheim & back numbers of Close Up with stuff by Eisenstein' and expressed a desire 'to go to Moscow and work under Eisenstein for a year'.[46] In his letters of this period, his frustration with the composition of *Murphy* – 'I have done next to no work on Murphy, all the sense & impulse seem to have collapsed'[47] – alternate with expressions of interest in the practical aspects of filmmaking:

> I met one Fitzgerald, cinematography expert […] He was very nice and showed a little film on a pillow cover. He has a good 16mm. camera & projector and seems to know a lot about the actual tricks of phot[o]graphy. Mais pauvre en genie. And no interest in montage. How should one set about getting into a decent studio, or even a bad one, simply to pick up the trade?[48]

He writes to Thomas McGreevy about his developing interest in learning how to make films: 'What I would learn under a person like Pudovkin is how to handle a camera, the higher trucs of the editing bench, & so on, of which I know as little as of quantity surveying.'[49] In March, he decides that he wants to go to study for a year at the Moscow State Institute of Cinematography, and writes a letter to Eisenstein:

> I write to you on the advice of Mr Jack Isaacs of London, to ask to be considered for admission to the Moscow State School of Cinematography. Born 1906 in Dublin and 'educated' there. 1928–1930 lecteur d'anglais at Ecole Normale, Paris. Worked with Joyce, collaborated in French translation of part of his Work in Progress (N.R.F., May 1931) and in critical symposium concerning same (Our Exagmination, etc). Published Proust (essay, Chatto & Windus, London 1931), More Pricks Than Kicks (short stories, do., 1934), Echo's Bones (poems, Europa Press, Paris 1935). I have no experience of studio work and it is naturally in the scenario and editing end of the subject that I am most interested. It is because I realise that the script is function of its means of realisation that I am anxious to make contact with your mastery […] and beg you to consider me a serious cinéaste worthy of admission to your school. I could stay a year at least.[50]

[46] Beckett to Thomas McGreevy, 29 January 1936, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 1, 305, 309.
[47] Ibid., 306.
[48] Ibid., 307.
[49] Ibid., 311.
[50] Beckett to Sergei Eisenstein, 2 March 1936, Ibid., 317.

As Matthijs Engelberts observes, Beckett's decision to make contact with the Moscow film school, founded in 1919, rather than the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences at the University of Southern California, founded in 1929 by Louis B. Mayer of MGM, clearly signals his primary concern with the 'experimental, modernist strand in cinema and theory', and of filmmakers and theorists 'defending it as an art medium and eager to influence its development in order to exploit its artistic possibilities and heighten its status'.[51] It is an interest which had emerged within the context of a modernist culture of parallel histories and interconnected representations between literature and cinema. Beckett's first published work, which he mentions in the letter to Eisenstein – the 1929 essay on Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (also known as *Work in Progress*), 'Dante…Bruno.Vico..Joyce' – was situated in and engaged with a modernist culture which had brought Joyce and Eisenstein together into a dialogue underlined by shared assumptions. Beckett had of course become a close friend and associate of Joyce when he lived in Paris for two years as a Lecteur at the École Normale Supérieure from 1928 to 1930, and like Belacqua, in *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, was immersed in the heady Parisian atmosphere of 'concerts, cinemas, cocktails, theatres, aperitifs'.[52] Joyce himself had commissioned his essay on *Work on Progress*, and it was published in the journal *transition,* alongside his first short story, 'Assumption'. Between 1927 and 1938, *transition* sought to bring into sharp focus the relations between film and literature. As Sam Slote notes, the editor, Eugene Jolas, harnessed 'the literary experimentations in *transition* into a full-fledged revolution, something he formalised into a manifesto, largely based around Joyce's *Work in Progress*, "The Revolution of the Word", in 1929 – which appeared in the same issue as Beckett's first two published pieces'.[53] This revolution of the word in *transition*, as Michael North argues, was 'an optical as well as an aural phenomenon, and film and photography were to provide much of the momentum behind the revolution'.[54] Montage-inflected poetry by Robert Denos, Philippe Soupault and Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes appeared alongside Joyce's *Work in Progress*, Artaud's film script for *The Seashell and the Clergyman* and Eisenstein's essays.

[51] Matthijs Engelberts, 'Cinema', in ed. Anthony Uhlmann, *Samuel Beckett in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 279–288; 280.

[52] Beckett, *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, 37.

[53] Sam Slote, 'The Joyce Circle', in ed. Uhlmann, *Samuel Beckett in Context*, 150–159; 152.

[54] Michael North, *Camera Works: Photography and the Twentieth-Century Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 68, 65.

In Beckett's essay on *Work in Progress*, his account of Joyce's 'savage economy of hieroglyphics'[55] echoes Eisenstein's delineation of the cinematic ideogram in his essay 'The Cinematographic Principle and The Ideogram', published in June 1930 in *transition*. The hieroglyph, or the ideogram – Beckett uses the word in his account of an early viewing of *Film*: 'the images obtained probably gain in force what they lose as ideograms'[56] – had become, by this point, a central and recurring idea in the developing modernist culture of shared principles and techniques between film and literature. Eugene Jolas wrote in 1927: 'We need new words, new abstractions, new hieroglyphics, new symbols, new myths, new symbols and signs.'[57] As early as 1915, Vachel Lindsay had drawn a comparison between the hieroglyphic aspects of film and 'the invention of the picture-writing of the stone age'.[58] Jean Epstein also described cinema as 'a pictorial language, like the hieroglyphs of ancient Egypt'.[59] For D.W. Griffith, cinema was 'a new universal language',[60] and Blaise Cendrars described the variety of possible shot sequences as a 'new cinematic alphabet'.[61] As Bela Balázs argued in 1924, 'in the motion picture screens all over the world we currently witness the development of the first international language: that of facial expression and physical gestures'.[62] The significance of the hieroglyph, in the international modernist culture of writers connected to *transition,* was exemplified in the dialogue between Joyce and Eisenstein. As Eisenstein argues in 'The Cinematographic Principle and The Ideogram': 'it has been left to James Joyce to develop in literature the depictive line of the Japanese hieroglyph'.[63] Eisenstein began reading *Ulysses* in February 1928,[64] noting in his diary that he 'received *Ulysses*, the Bible of the new cinema'.[65] In October 1928, he begins to read *Work in Progress,* as published in *transition*;[66] later that year, during

[55] Samuel Beckett, 'Dante…Bruno.Vico..Joyce', in *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of* Work in Progress (London: Faber & Faber, [1929] 1962), 14–15.

[56] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 29 September 1964, *No Author Better Served: The Correspondence of Samuel Beckett and Alan Schneider*, ed. Maurice Harmon (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 166.

[57] The Editors, 'Suggestions for a New Magic', *transition,* 3 (June 1927), 179.

[58] Vachel Lindsay, *The Art of the Moving Picture* (New York: Macmillan, 1915), 25.

[59] Jean Epstein, 'On Certain Characteristics of Photogénie', in ed. Richard Abel, *French Film Theory and Criticism, 1907–1939, vol. I* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 315.

[60] Lillian Gish, *The Movies, Mr. Griffith, and Me* (London: W.H. Allen, 1969), 34.

[61] Quoted in North, *Camera Works*, 19.

[62] Balázs, 'Visible Man', in Edith Bone, trans., *Theory of the Film* (London: D. Dobson, 1952), 44.

[63] Eisenstein, 'The Cinematic Principle and the Ideogram', in ed. and trans. Jay Leyda, *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory* (New York: Harcourt, [1949] 1977), 35.

[64] Leon Moussinac, *Sergei Eisenstein*, trans. D. Sandy Petrey (New York: Crown, 1970), 148.

[65] Eisenstein, 15 February 1928, Jay Leyda and Zina Voynow, *Eisenstein at Work* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), xii.

[66] Moussinac, *Eisenstein*, 120–121.

November–December, he gives a series of lectures in London in which he advocates the close study of *Ulysses* for practising filmmakers wishing to learn advanced cinematic technique.[67] According to Neil Cornwell, Joyce in turn had almost certainly read Eisenstein's essay in *transition*:[68] this was, after all, the journal which had been publishing *Work in Progress.* The two figures met at Joyce's flat in Paris on 30 November 1929.[69] Joyce played a gramophone recording of his reading of 'Anna Livia Plurabelle';[70] he told Eisenstein how much he would like to see *Battleship Potemkin* and *October*, 'despite his almost total blindness', and how 'intensely interested' he was in Eisenstein's ideas about the 'inner film monologue'.[71]

In his essay on *Work in Progress*, Beckett draws attention to the significance, for Joyce, of Giambattista Vico's *New Science* (1744). For Vico, the origins 'of any word whatsoever can be traced back to some prelingual symbol';[72] during this 'Hieroglyphic' prelingual period, before 'personifications were reduced to diminutive signs',[73] as Beckett puts it, 'language was gesture. If a man wanted to say "sea", he pointed to the sea.'[74] The notion of the prelingual hieroglyph overlaps and co-exists, in *Finnegans Wake*, with a dense texture of reference to cinema, the 'shadows by the film folk'. Shaun appears as a 'Moviefigure on its scenic section' in 'longshots, upcloses'; Mercius thanks 'Movies from the innermost depths of my still attrite heart'. The sense of 'moving pictures'[75] conflates cinema with the idea of the hieroglyph: in Beckett's words, the 'reading' of Joyce's 'hieroglyphic […] extraction of language and painting and gesture',[76] requires a peculiar alertness to the overlaps between the sign system of symbolic language and the pictorial immediacy of the visible hieroglyph.

[67] For a summary of his lectures on *Ulysses*, see Marie Seton, *Sergei M. Eisenstein: A Biography* (London: Dobson, 1978), 482–485.

[68] Neil Cornwell, *James Joyce and the Russians* (London: Macmillan, 1992), 80.

[69] Gosta Werner, 'Joyce and Sergei Eisenstein', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 27.3 (1990), 491–509; 494. On Joyce and Eisenstein, see also William V. Costanzo, 'Joyce and Eisenstein: Literary Reflections on the Reel World', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 11.1 (1984), 175–180; Richard Barton Palmer, 'Eisensteinian Montage and Joyce's *Ulysses*: The Analogy Reconsidered', *MOSAIC,* 28.3 (1985), 73–85.

[70] Eisenstein, *Immoral Memories*, trans. Herbert Marshall (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983), 214–215.

[71] Eisenstein, 'A Course in Treatment', *Film Form,* 104. Joyce later told Eugene Jolas that for any film adaptation of *Ulysses,* he could 'only think of two persons qualified enough: Eisenstein and Walter Ruttman'. Patricia Hutchins, *James Joyce's World* (London: Methuen, 1947), 245.

[72] Beckett, 'Dante…Bruno.Vico..Joyce', 10, 11.

[73] Giambattista Vico, *The New Science of G Vico* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), 405, 401.

[74] Beckett, 'Dante…Bruno.Vico..Joyce', 14–15.

[75] James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London: Faber & Faber, [1939] 1975), 534:25, 221:21–22, 602:27, 194:2–3, 565:6.

[76] Beckett, 'Dante…Bruno.Vico..Joyce', 14–15.

Eisenstein applied Joyce's hieroglyphic technique to his own theory and practice of montage, where shots are edited together into 'montage-phrases'[77] in accordance with 'the principle of the hieroglyph'. The performative body of the actor is 'dismembered' into 'a close-up of clutching hands', 'medium shots of the struggle', 'an extreme close up of bulging eyes'; 'montage-phrases' are then 'newly collected into one whole'. The method by which 'shots that are depictive, single in meaning, neutral in content' are combined 'into intellectual contexts and series' bears comparison, for Eisenstein, with hieroglyphic language, where for instance 'the picture for water and the picture of an eye signifies 'to weep'; the picture of an ear near the drawing of a door signifies "to listen"; a knife and a heart signifies "sorrow" '.[78] Eisenstein's method of 'intellectual montage', as defined in his theoretical writing and films such as *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) and *October* (1928), consisted of an attempt to create a hieroglyphic film language, a confluence of 'visual figures of speech and abstract discursive arguments'.[79] In *October*, a woman's hands express sorrow, then one hand clenches into a fist which she raises in the air, followed by other members of the crowd also raising their fists in the air: the sequence of close-ups of hands articulates the development of individual grief into collective anger. Visual metaphors abound in montage sequences in *Strike* (1925): capitalists squeeze juice from lemons; strikers are harassed by mounted soldiers; the massacre of the strikers is intercut with the butchering of a bull.

Beckett compares a sequence of simultaneous montage in *The General Line* (1929) to a section in a poem: 'I do not remember ever having seen any of [Cecil's poems] before. One in which the rime mouth-drouth occurs repeatedly is most remarkable, like the bull let loose among the cows in Eisenstein's General Line.'[80] As James Knowlson notes, although 'nothing came of his approach to Eisenstein […] it was his keen interest in film theory, and especially in montage or "constructive editing", that was to make an important contribution to his future career- but as a playwright and a director, not as a film maker'.[81] Yet Beckett's sense of the hieroglyph as a form of visual rhyme, 'like the bull let loose among the cows', and his sense of the performative body as a textual system of recurrent isolated gestures, resonates across both his theatre and film productions. In *Ghost Trio*, the way F is '*bowed forward* […] *clutching with both hands a small*

[77] Eisenstein, 'A Dialectic Approach to Film Form' and 'Dickens, Griffith and the Film Today', *Film Form,* 60, 236.
[78] Eisenstein, 'The Cinematic Principle and the Ideogram', 29–30.
[79] David Bordwell, *The Cinema of Eisenstein* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 13.
[80] Beckett to Arland Ussher, 25 March 1936, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 1, 328.
[81] Knowlson, *Images of Beckett*, 119.

cassette' (409) recalls Krapp's gesture as he '*bends over [his tape] machine*' (233). In the production which Beckett directed at the Schiller-Theater, Berlin, in 1969, Martin Held as Krapp turns to glance over his shoulder, as though aware of someone behind him: 'as Beckett explained, Death is standing behind him and unconsciously he's looking for it';[82] the gesture recurs in *Ghost Trio*, in F's reflex turn when he 'thinks he hears her' (410). In the Schiller-Theater production of *Krapp's Last Tape,* during a mime sequence when Krapp reminisces about the girl on lake, Beckett instructed Martin Held to 'put his arm about his body the right on the left upper arm, the left on the right' and to shudder;[83] Krapp shudders from the cold, but his folded arms also signal his aloneness, having 'nothing to talk to but his dying self, and nothing to talk to him but his dead one'.[84] Similarly, for his 1976 production of *Footfalls*, he asked Billie Whitelaw to repeat this gesture, explaining that May felt 'cold the whole time' in the way she 'holds [her] body. Everything is frost and night', but also that her arms folded across her body indicate 'that [she] is there exclusively for herself'.[85] Elaborate sequences involving gestures with the hands resonate throughout Beckett's plays and films, from the close-ups of Buster Keaton's hands in *Film*, the communal praying in *Come and Go* and Winnie's hands as she mimes an '*inaudible prayer*' (138), to the ritual gestures in *Nacht und Träume*.

The fascination the hieroglyph held for Eisenstein and Joyce peaks during the transition from silent film to what Joyce calls the 'soundpicture'.[86] Joyce continued to visit the cinema – sometimes with Beckett, who mentions trying to get Joyce and Nora 'out to see [Chaplin's] Modern Times this evening'[87] – during the writing of *Finnegans Wake*, despite his rapidly deteriorating eyesight. He suffered from prolonged periods of near-total blindness during the composition of Book III in 1926, which includes a section resembling a film script for a talking picture. For Eisenstein, it was Joyce who helped point the way forward for film as an art form, in the new age of the sound picture. Eisenstein's proclamations on the 'non-coincidence' of sound and image, and how this method 'affords new possibilities of developing and perfecting the visual mounting'[88] were

[82] 'Martin Held talks to Ronald Hayman', *The Times*, 25 April 1970, quoted in Donald McMillan and Martha Fehsenfeld, *Beckett in the Theatre* (London: John Calder, 1988), 280.

[83] Ibid., 266.

[84] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 4 May 1960, Harmon, *No Author Better Served*, 59.

[85] Asmus, 'Rehearsal Notes for the German Premiere of Beckett's *That Time* and *Footfalls*', in ed. S.E. Gontarski, *On Beckett* (New York: Grove Press, 1986), 258.

[86] Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 570:14.

[87] Beckett to Thomas McGreevy, 5 January 1938, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 1, 580.

[88] Eisenstein, W.I. Pudovkin and G.V. Alexandroff, 'The Sound Film: A Statement from U.S.S.R.', *Close Up*, 3.4 (1928); Laura Marcus, James Donald and Anne Friedberg eds *Close Up, 1927–1933: Cinema and Modernism* (London: Cassell, 1998), 84.

clearly informed by his first encounter with *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. The spoken word in cinema could be renewed by a montage method which would incorporate both synchronized speech and Joycean interior monologue; this technique would resemble listening 'to one's own train of thought, particularly in an excited state, in order to catch yourself looking at and listening to your mind',[89] a view which chimes with Beckett's account of *Finnegans Wake*, that it is 'to be looked at and listened to'.[90]

For Beckett, Joyce's connection to Eisenstein, and figures such as the film critic Nino Frank – in February 1938, he wrote that 'Nino Frank was there [in Joyce's apartment]. He may put me in touch with film people here'[91] – kept his interest in filmmaking alive. As James Knowlson notes, 'his interest in film persisted throughout the 1930s with the advent of sound and colour, and, as his letters and private diaries show, during those years he often went to the cinema in Dublin, London, Paris and Germany'.[92] But it was the silent film, and its connection to the modernist culture of his formative years, which remained Beckett's primary concern. Of *Becky Sharp* (1936), the first feature film that was made in three-colour Technicolor, he told Thomas McGreevy that it was

> a complete flop here and was taken off at the Savoy after three days & not transferred to any other house. That does not encourage my hope that the industrial film will become so completely naturalistic, in stereoscopic colour & gramophonic sound, that a back water may be created for the two-dimensional silent film that had barely emerged from its rudiments when it was swamped. Then there would be two separate things and no question of a fight between them or rather of a rout.[93]

As with Eisenstein, Beckett remained interested in the marginal possibilities of the sound picture in as far as it could extend representations of interiority, what Eisenstein calls the 'inner film monologue'.[94] His 1934 unpublished short story, 'Lightening Calculation',[95] rejected by publishers and eventually revised and incorporated into *Murphy*, invokes the talking picture as a model

[89] Eisenstein, 'A Course in Treatment', 105.
[90] Beckett, 'Dante…Bruno.Vico..Joyce', 14–15.
[91] Beckett to Thomas McGreevy, February 1938, quoted in Knowlson, *Images of Beckett*, 119.
[92] Knowlson, *Images of Beckett*, 118.
[93] Beckett to Thomas McGreevy, 6 February 1936, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 1, 312.
[94] Eisenstein, 'A Course in Treatment', 104.
[95] Beckett, 'Lightening Calculation', draft of *Murphy*, 1934, MS 2902, Beckett International Foundation: Reading University Library.

to describe the workings of the protagonist's mind.[96] In one sequence, the protagonist Quigley, a character which draws on autobiographical elements and Beckett's experience of living in London, remembers his father's death (Beckett's own father had died in October 1933): 'He could not forget his father's death, the entire process of which, from the falling ill to the internment, had become a talkie in his brain of almost continuous performance featuring himself, in postures that impressed him as ignoble.'[97] But Beckett's attitude to the talkies is generally characterized by a resistance to their rapid ascent – an attitude shared by writers, and film and theatre makers within modernist culture – and it becomes a defining feature of some of his later statements on cinema. Many of the films he saw in Germany suffered badly, in his view, from sound synchronization: Frank Lloyd's *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1936), 'actually loses through German synchronisation';[98] a film starring Werner Krauss, *Burg Theatre* (1936) loses 'practically everything in synchronisation'.[99] Sian Philips recalls a heated exchange many years later between Beckett and Peter O'Toole over the possibility of a film of *Godot*: '[T]hrough a haze of tiredness and boredom I heard Mr Beckett say, Godot can never be filmed. No film with dialogue has ever succeeded.'[100] Cinema, he remarks in 1956, was 'killed in the cradle'.[101] That Beckett found synchronized dialogue antithetical to cinema echoes Rudolph Arnheim's view that

> the introduction of sound film smashed many of the forms that the film artists were using in favor of the inartistic demand for the greatest possible 'naturalness' […]. The development of the silent film was arrested possibly forever when it had hardly begun to produce good results; but it has left us with a few splendidly mature films.[102]

It is a view widely shared by key figures across the spectrum of modernist culture, including Eisenstein, Brecht, Artaud, Beckett, Chaplin and Meyerhold. The new requirement to stage actors according to the placement of early non-directional microphones, and to arrange sequences of shots so as to prioritize

[96] For a discussion on 'Lightening Calculation', Eisensteinian montage and 'pathos structure', see J.M.B. Antoine-Dunne, 'Beckett and Eisenstein on Light and Contrapuntal Montage', *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui,* 11 (2001), 315–323.

[97] Beckett, 'Lightening Calculation'.

[98] Beckett, 'German Diaries', 16 November 1936.

[99] Beckett to Mary Manning Howe, 18 January 1937, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 1, 423.

[100] Siân Phillips, *Private Faces: The Autobiography* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1999), 190.

[101] Beckett to H.O. White, 2 July 1956, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, *vol. 2: 1941–1956*, eds George Craig, Martha Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 629.

[102] Arnheim, *Film*, 154.

the continuity of dialogue between the actors, created in early sound cinema what Beckett called 'the stale chinoiseries of take + cut'.[103] According to the cinematographer Michel Kelber, 'we were always supposed to show the actors from the front – not in profile, not from the back – because the management wanted to show the public how the sound was perfectly synchronized with the lip movement'.[104] Synchronized speech required what James Naremore names 'the rule of expressive coherence', where the actor must 'preserve the illusion of a unified self, by maintaining coherence in the face of multiple possibilities'.[105] The modernist cinema of the twenties, with its repertoire of techniques including intellectual montage, variable speed and motion, camera movement untethered to standardized patterns of continuity cutting, superimposition, the creative use of filters, focal points and angles, was suddenly replaced by the formula of synchronized, theatrical dialogue and the consequent need for cause-and-effect storytelling and the elucidation of character and motive in a naturalistic manner.

For the writers of *Close Up,* the 'reactionary strivings of [early] talking films' had forced cinema to return to the 'proscenium front'[106] of early cinema, with its frontal staging and linear, causal editing patterns. Many filmmakers during this period turned to plays for their material, as demonstrated by the proliferation of theatrical adaptions, exemplified in films such as *Outward Bound* (1930), *Dinner at Eight* (1933), *Anna Christie* (1931), *The Petrified Forest* (1936), *Henry V* (1946), *The Little Foxes* (1941), *Miss Julie* (1951), *The Beggar's Opera* (1953) and *Ordet* (1954). As Kovacs notes, 'sound dialogues did not revolutionize narrative composition but instead modified the dramatic structure sufficiently so that rethinking the relationship between theater and cinema became necessary'.[107] For Dreyer, writing in 1933, 'the talking film presents itself like a theater piece in concentrated form'.[108] In fact, the tensions and overlaps with theatre date back much further than the arrival of the talkies. Directors in the silent era who sought to pioneer film form were explicitly reacting against the histrionic theatricality and frontal staging, for instance, of pre–First World War Film D'Art productions. It was D.W. Griffith who introduced and standardized, between 1908 and 1913, the basic

[103] Beckett, 'German Diaries', 24 October 1936.

[104] Quoted in Charles O'Brien, *Cinema's Conversion to Sound: Technology and Film Style in France and the U.S.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 126.

[105] James Naremore, *Acting in the Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 72.

[106] Kenneth Macpherson, 'As Is', Marcus et al. eds *Close Up,* 91.

[107] Kovács, *Screening Modernism*, 240.

[108] Carl Theodor Dreyer, 'The Real Talking Film' (1933), in ed. Donald Skoller, *Dreyer in Double Reflection* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), 54.

techniques of narrative film language, including continuity editing, temporal simultaneity, point of view, the narrative close-up, and these were techniques which repudiated the frontal, tableaux style of earlier cinema.[109] Yet one of the consequences of Griffith's revolution in film language was a new style of performance marked by subtlety, realism and restraint, clearly influenced by the theatre of naturalism (Griffith himself had acted in plays by Ibsen before he turned to film directing).

As Kovács notes, 'cinematic modernism has a strong theatrical tradition going back to the early twenties, that is, to the very beginning of modernism in cinema'.[110] Eisenstein originally conceived his 'montage of attractions' for the theatre, before applying its principles to film. Originally a student of Meyerhold, Eisenstein derived his method of 'expressive movement' by combining Meyerhold's reflex response in biomechanics with an organic acting style more suited to film, in order to arouse the spectator's attention through physiological shocks and spectacle, as for instance the worm-infested meat sequence, the attempted execution of the sailors, and the Odessa steps in *Battleship Potemkin*. His earliest published work on montage, 'The Montage of Attractions' (1923), was published in Mayakovsky and Osip Brik's *Lef*, a revolutionary journal, partly based on the principles of Constructivism, which sought to forge new alliances between modernist literature, theatre and film. Eisenstein's essay outlined how montage, at this time a theatrical method, could 'engage its audience through a calculated assembly of "strong moments" of shock or surprise'.[111] According to David Bordwell:

> Eisenstein' s move from theatre direction to filmmaking affected his thinking in ways that set him significantly apart from his contemporaries. Most Western and Soviet film theory sought to draw a sharp line between theatre and cinema. If cinema were likened to theatre, many worried, the purely reproductive role of the camera would be unduly emphasized and cinematic specificity would be ignored. Even theorists who emphasized photographic reproduction, such as Vertov, often denounced theatre as artificial and urged the director to take the camera out into raw reality. In this context Eisenstein is anomalous. Although he does suggest important differences between theatre and film, he adapts many of his theatre-based ideas to his new medium.[112]

[109] Tom Gunning, *D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 114–116.
[110] Kovács, *Screening Modernism*, 241.
[111] Bordwell, *Eisenstein*, 6.
[112] Ibid., 118.

Eisenstein's essays on the Japanese ideogram incorporate a discussion of the 'cinematographic method' in Kabuki theatre. In *Chushingura,* a fight sequence is followed by an empty landscape, 'exactly as if, in a film, we had cut in a piece of landscape to create a mood in a scene';[113] in a hara-kiri scene, movement is reduced to a mechanically artificial tempo, as though it were in slow motion. In *Narukami,* an actor quickly changes his grease-paint make-up, making a sudden transition from being drunk to mad by a 'mechanical cut';[114] Eisenstein also notes the 'principle of "disintegrated" acting' in Kabuki, where an actor performs a role by isolating parts of his body, acting with 'only the right arm', or 'one leg', or 'with the neck and head only',[115] as though he were breaking his body into shots and cutting in a series of close-ups. Eisenstein's earliest films expand and refine techniques conceived for his Proletkult Theatre productions; his first film, *Strike* (1925), which depicts the conditions of the proletariat in the events preceding the October Revolution, and the Bolshevik's organization of resistance transforming into a workers' movement, is heavily indebted to his work at the Proletkult:

> its acrobatic fights and clownish spies recall *The Wiseman*, while its factory flywheels and mazes of catwalks hark back to *Gas Masks*. Like *Do You Hear, Moscow?* (1923) the film turns the characters into abstraction […] The film also utilizes the direct address of the plays in a final image of eyes staring at the camera and a hortatory title: 'Proletarians, remember!'[116]

Certain 'film element[s]',[117] as Eisenstein puts it, were already a feature of his stage productions, and these were then more fully developed in *Strike* and his subsequent work in mise-en-scène and editing for the screen. His production of *The Sage* utilized interruptions instead of straightforward scene changes, with fragments of dialogue in one scene overlapping with and interrupting the next in a montage effect, 'colliding, creating new meanings', with 'quick changes of action, scene intersections, and simultaneous playing of several scenes';[118] *Precipice* expressed the 'dynamics of the city' through 'elements of double and multiple exposure – "superimposing" images of man onto images of buildings' and 'glimpses of faces, hands, legs, pillars, heads, domes[…] close-ups cut into views of a city';[119] in *Do You Hear, Moscow?* 'the composition singled out groups,

[113] Eisenstein, 'The Unexpected', *Film Form*, 22.
[114] Eisenstein, 'The Cinematic Principle and the Ideogram', 42.
[115] Ibid., 42.
[116] Bordwell, *Eisenstein*, 8.
[117] Eisenstein, 'Theatre to Cinema', *Film Form*, 14.
[118] Ibid., 8, 13.
[119] Ibid., 14–15.

shifted the spectator's attention from one point to another, presented close-ups, a hand holding a letter, the play of eyebrows, a glance'.[120]

Modernist theatre expands and refines a project abandoned by cinema after the coming of sound. According to Eisenstein's mentor, Meyerhold, 'the dialogue retheatricalizes the cinema, slowing down the pace of actions […] the moment the film began to talk, the international power of the screen began to diminish'. For Meyerhold, the power of Chaplin's universal appeal lay in an anti-naturalist style of gesture which reduced dialogue to an ancillary function: 'a Russian peasant will refuse to accept Chaplin as an Englishman'.[121] Meyerhold, along with Brecht and Artaud, imported the techniques of gesture in silent film into his theatre practice: 'words […] are only embellishments on the design of movement',[122] and 'the essence of human relationships is determined by gestures, poses, glances and silences. Words alone cannot say everything. Hence there must be a *pattern of movement* on the stage.'[123] Meyerhold's idea that 'every movement is a hieroglyph with its own peculiar meaning',[124] and Brecht's *gestus*, influenced, as John Willett argues, by the 'acting style of silent cinema',[125] echoes Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, and his conception of the bodies of actors as 'moving hieroglyphs'.[126]

Artaud's theatrical method also derives from a silent film culture in which he played a significant role, as an actor in Carl Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1927) and Abel Gance's *Napoléon* (1927), and as screenwriter of the first surrealist film, Germaine Dulac's *La Coquille et le clergyman* (1928), which was first published in *transition*. For Artaud, 'the elucidations of speech' in the talking picture arrests 'the unconscious and spontaneous poetry of image; the illustration and completion of the meaning of an image by speech show[s] the limitations of the cinema';[127] it is a view which set him on course to develop, between 1931 and 1937, his influential vision of a 'sign, gesture and posture language with its own ideographic values'.[128] The monopoly of the

[120] Ibid., 15.
[121] 'The Reconstruction of the Theatre', in ed. and trans. Edward Braun, *Meyerhold on Theatre* (London: Methuen, [1969] 1998), 255.
[122] Meyerhold, 'The Fairground Booth' (1912), *Meyerhold on Theatre*, 124.
[123] 'First Attempt at a Stylised Theatre' (1907), *Meyerhold on Theatre,* 56.
[124] Meyerhold, 'Biomechanics', *Meyerhold on Theatre*, 200.
[125] Brecht, 'The Question of Criteria for Judging Acting', in *Brecht on Theatre*, ed. and trans. John Willett (London: Methuen, [1964] 2001), 54–55.
[126] Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double,* trans. Victor Corti (London: John Calder, 1970), 29.
[127] Antonin Artaud, 'The Premature Old Age of the Cinema', in trans. Helen Weaver, *Selected Writings* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976), 124.
[128] Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double,* 27–29.

synchronized film, for Artaud, represented 'the very negation of cinema': 'To make a talking picture now, or at any time, seems wrong to me. The Americans who have staked everything on it are preparing a very sinister future for themselves, as are all companies which produce bad films on the pretext that they are more saleable; the talking picture is idiotic, absurd.'[129] Beckett owned a copy of *The Theatre and Its Double* (1958)[130] which, as James Knowlson points out, 'we know he read – "for the occasional blaze" was the way he put it'.[131] For Artaud, the transition to sound had obstructed the development of an anti-naturalist silent cinema still in its infancy, a cinema of visceral sensation rather than discursive speech. He denounces the course that cinema had taken, while importing his idea of a cinema of sensation – 'a new bodily language no longer based on words but on signs which emerges through the maze of gestures' – into his theoretical writing and his work as director at the Alfred Jarry Theatre. The primacy of the image and the performative body in silent film deeply informs his vision of a new dramaturgy and method resembling musical or hieroglyphic notation to enable the 'transcription of gesture'.[132]

Beckett's sense of the complex web of interrelatedness between cinema and theatre, where each medium defines and modifies the other, maps his dramaturgical thinking from his earliest work. While writing his unfinished first play, *Human Wishes,* based on the Platonic relationship between Samuel Johnson and Hester Thrale, 'and the breakdown of Johnson as soon as Thrale disappeared',[133] he also imagined the prospect of a film based on the same dramatic situation:

> Think of a film opening with Johnson dancing home to his den in Fleet Street after the last visit to Mrs Thrale, forgetting a lamppost & hurrying back. Can't think why there hasn't been a film of Johnson, with [Charles] Laughton. But I think one act, with something like the psychology above, in an outburst to Mrs Thrale, or in his house in confidence to the mysterious servant, would be worth doing.[134]

In 1931, in the collaboration with George Pelorson on a piece of burlesque for a Trinity College, Dublin, Modern Languages Society event, Beckett thought

[129] Antonin Artaud, *The Collected Works of Antonin Artaud*, vol. 3 (London: Calder and Boyars, 1972), 121.
[130] Nixon and Van Hulle, *Beckett's Library*, 94.
[131] Knowlson, *Images of Beckett*, 107.
[132] Artaud, *The Collected Works of Antonin Artaud*, vol. 3, 121, 37, 29
[133] Beckett to Mary Manning Howe, 13 December 1936, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 1, 396.
[134] Ibid., 397.

up the title *Le Kid*, conflating Corneille's *Le Cid* with Chaplin's *The Kid* (1921); according to Ulrika Maude,

> the influence of music-hall routines and the stylised acting of silent films seems to have been prominently present in this production in which Beckett himself acted the role of Don Dièguе, carrying an umbrella and an alarm clock and moving to the frantic dictates of a speeded-up clock, as if in anticipation of Chaplin's film *Modern Times* from 1936.[135]

Beckett suggested a presentation of *Le Kid* alongside a short play, Denys Amiel and Andre Obey's *La souriante Mme Beudet* (1921). Knowlson speculates that he had 'either read or seen it in Paris the previous year',[136] though it is just as likely he had encountered the play via Germain Dulac's impressionist film of 1922. During Beckett's time in Germany in 1936–37, as the German diaries reveals, he visited the theatre and cinema in equal measure. Towards the end of his stay, Beckett met the actor and theatre director Eggers Kastner, and engaged with him in long discussions about theatre and cinema in relation to Joyce:

> Long discussion about theatre and film, which Eggers condemns, calls at the best intellectualism. Won't hear of possibility of word's inadequacy. The dissonance that has become principle and that the word cannot express, because literature can no more escape from chronologies to simultaneities, from Nebeneinander to Miteinander, that [than] the human voice can sing chords. As I talk and listen I realize suddenly how *Work in Progress* is the only possibility [possible] development from *Ulysses*, the heroic attempt to make literature accomplish what belongs to music – the Miteinander and the simultaneous.[137]

Here, the sense of 'the simultaneous' and the 'word's inadequacy' recalls the method, as Arnheim puts it, of Eisenstein's 'simultaneous montage'[138] and the modernist discourse around the hieroglyph as an escape from the impasse of a speech-based aesthetic. When Beckett started writing for the stage, in part as a relief from the monologic voice of his prose, he wrote two plays: as Anna McMullan notes, 'at the time of its composition, Beckett clearly regarded *Eleutheria* as a serious work to be considered along with *Godot*'; in 1951, he offered both to Roger Blin and was unsure as to which play Blin, who had acted in thirty films alongside his stage work, would choose to direct.[139] *Eleutheria*

[135] Ulrika Maude, 'Convulsive Aesthetics: Beckett, Chaplin and Charcot', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Samuel Beckett and the Arts*, ed. S.E. Gontarski (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 47.
[136] Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, 123.
[137] Beckett, 'German Diaries', 26 March 1937, quoted in Knolwson, *Damned to Fame*, 258.
[138] Arnheim, *Film*, 122.
[139] Anna McMullan, *Performing Embodiment in Samuel Beckett* (London: Routledge, 2007), 30.

remains entirely rooted in exclusively theatrical traditions, alluding in parodic mode to Shakespeare, Jarry, Molière, Sophocles, Corneille, Shaw, Ibsen, Hauptmann and Pirandello. By comparison, the distinctiveness of *Godot* partly lies in its blending of theatrical and music-hall techniques with the clowning, physical choreography, cross-talk and crude jokes of Hollywood comedy, from Chaplin to Laurel and Hardy and the Marx Bros.

Beckett's theatre practice, from the beginning of his work as a director in the mid-sixties, belongs to a modernist tradition of hybrid interactions between theatre and cinema. After the making of *Film* and *Comédie*, he develops a theatrical style of rigorous framing, close-ups, asynchronous sound, and a sense of the theatrical event as predetermined in advance of the live encounter with an audience. That he begins to adapt certain theatrical works to film further attests to the continuing influence of the experiments in *Film* and *Comédie*. Beckett's deep satisfaction with the level of control in the production of the film of *Comédie* strikingly contrasts with his growing frustration with the contingencies of theatre: 'Far too much theatre for my liking';[140] 'How sick I am of critics, actors, directors, and spectators'.[141] His solution was to counteract the pressures of theatrical contingency with a meticulously pre-determined organization which sought to enclose the performance as though it were a pre-recorded artefact.

The beginning of Beckett's work as a director marks a crucial shift in his sense of the convergences between theatre and film, a transition marked by his first encounter with filmmaking, specifically the production of *Film* and the adaptation of *Comédie. Film* is set in 1929, a year which marks, in film history, the beginning of the end for silent film production. But it was produced in 1963, during the rediscovery of silent film in the context of cinema's modernist second wave. The tendency of silent film modernism's investigation into the formal properties of the medium, having lost momentum with the arrival of the talkies in 1928, is revived by the second wave modernism of the sixties, a period which coincides with Beckett's first practical encounter with camera and editing technique, and his first experience as a director of his own work.

The category of literary modernism, as strictly defined by chronology, excludes a full reckoning, I argue, of film's distinct aesthetic and institutional history, and Beckett's work for stage and screen. Recent studies, including Laura Marcus' *The Tenth Muse: Writing About Cinema in the Modernist Period* (OUP, 2010), Susan McCabe's *Cinematic Modernism* (CUP, 2006), David Trotter's *Cinema and Modernism* (Blackwell, 2007), Andrew Shail's *The Cinema and*

[140] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 1 September 1974, Harmon, *No Author Better Served*, 320.
[141] Ibid., 322.

the Origins of Literary Modernism (Routledge, 2012) and my own *The Speech-Gesture Complex: Modernism, Theatre, Cinema* (Edinburgh University Press, 2013), have sought to emphasize the transformative impact of cinema on the period category of literary modernism. Beckett is often placed in relation to the lineage of 'late modernism' without tidily belonging to a single period category; his uniqueness in this respect is reinforced if we consider the impact of cinema on his work, and the halts and delays in the development of film modernism, which runs parallel to literary modernism in the twenties, but is cut short by the arrival of sound. While literary modernism continues to explore the formal aspects of its medium and develops into the period of 'late modernism', the advent of sound returns cinema to the nineteenth century and gives rise to the realist style of classical Hollywood, a style largely derived from the techniques of the nineteenth-century novel and theatre. Film historians tend to characterize modernism as two separate periods which book-end the period of classical Hollywood. As András Bálint Kovács argues, 'in the case of modernism we are not talking of one single period, but two (1919–29, and 1958–75)';[142] for David Bordwell, modernism, in which 'spatial and temporal systems come forward and share with narrative the role of structuring the film', starts with Caligari, Gance and Epstein; there is a 'transitional period' with post-war Italian neo-realism, before the second wave of 'Tati, Godard, Duras and Bresson'.[143] This is in contrast to literary historians, for whom modernism, as Marina Mackay puts it, is 'so conventionally identified […] with a period book ended by two total wars and institutionalised under the threat of a third'.[144] As Tyrus Miller also notes, modernism is a 'period concept', referring to the common ground of divergent movements such as imagism, surrealism, dadaism, vorticism and the dynamic interaction between the arts during the interwar period. The elements of modernism as a period concept are so familiar as to constitute a kind of 'academic folk wisdom', which includes such principal features as 'the liberation of formal innovation; the destruction of tradition; the renewal of decadent conventions or habit-encrusted perceptions; the depersonalization of art; the radical subjectivization of art; ironic detachment'.[145] But these techniques cannot be transferred to film history in the same way. Despite experiments in form in the forties and fifties by, for instance, Orson Welles, Akira Kurosawa, American film noir and Italian neo-realism, the modernist project in film, as a

[142] Kovács, *Screening Modernism,* 52.
[143] David Bordwell, 'The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice', *Film Criticism* 4: 1 (1979), 23.
[144] Marina Mackay, *Modernism and World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 16.
[145] Tyrus Miller, *Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction and the Arts Between the Wars* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 4.

collective and sustained exploration of the formal aspects of the medium, is not rediscovered until the late fifties and sixties, in the work of filmmakers such as Godard, Bresson and Resnais.

In the first wave of modernism, filmmakers, unlike writers, did not have a tradition to react against: cinema as a tradition was invented by the French New Wave. Jean-Luc Godard remarked: 'A contemporary writer knows that authors such as Molière or Shakespeare existed. We are the first filmmakers who know that a [D. W.] Griffith existed. At the time when [Marcel] Carné, [Louis] Delluc, and [René] Clair made their first films, there was no critical or historical tradition yet.'[146] The collective emergence of second wave modernism in the sixties shattered the preconceptions of the classic-realist film, just as Joyce and Lewis dismantled and reconfigured the nineteenth-century novel. The films of Antonioni, Fellini, Bergman, Godard, Marker, Bresson, Duras and Resnais, while conforming to some of the narrative techniques of classical Hollywood, and often paying homage to directors such as Hitchcock, Nicholas Ray, Howard Hawks, John Huston and Chaplin, are generally characterized by a set of formal conventions which break, challenge or reinvent the established rules of classical-realist filmmaking.

Unlike the classical Hollywood narrative, characters in the modernist cinema lack clearly defined objectives; narrative structure is disconnected, episodic, often refusing causality as an organizational scheme to connect events; conflicts remain unresolved; endings are open, indeterminate. It is a cinema of 'psychological effects in search of their causes'[147] and is marked by an attempt to find a form to accommodate unpredictable and turbulent subjectivity. In films such as *8 ½, Hiroshima Mon Amour, Á Bout de Souffle, Persona*, mise-en-scène, editing patterns, camera movement, performance, the non-linear ordering of events and the relation of sound to image strive to represent the complex interiority of the central characters. Deleuze has characterized this period, in his influential study of cinema, as signalling a transition from the 'movement-image' to the 'time-image'. The movement-image emerges from Hollywood classical-realism, as developed from the silent era to the end of the studio system, and is defined by the linear ordering of events, the clear determination of spatial relations, and the momentum of a unified three-act narrative structured around the protagonist's attainment of clearly defined objectives. Where the movement-image is based on action and forward movement, the cinema of the time-image, which begins

[146] Quoted in Kovács, *Screening Modernism,* 16.
[147] Bordwell, 'The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice', 25.

in the immediate post-war period and comes to fruition in the modernist new wave of the sixties and seventies, is defined by memory, non-linearity, repetition, discontinuity, trauma, phantasms and the enfolding of temporal order into a 'crystalline structure' of mental process, where time is divided into 'a present which is passing and a past which is preserved, the strict contemporaneity of the present with the past that it will be, of the past with the present that it has been'.[148]

For Deleuze, this modernist turn in cinema is based on a newly discovered 'camera-consciousness', and in films which have 'acquired a taste for "making the camera felt"';[149] Deleuze cites an essay by Pasolini, based on a text delivered in June 1965 at the New Cinema Festival, Pesaro, and published in *Cahiers du Cinéma* in October 1965, where Pasolini discusses the 'presence of the camera' as a reflective consciousness: 'the great principle of wise filmmakers, in force up to the first years of the sixties ("Do not allow the camera to be felt!"), has been replaced by the opposite principle'.[150] The recent modernist turn, in Pasolini's account, has enabled the development of the cinematic equivalent of free indirect style in literature, a 'free indirect point-of-view shot' which 'serves to speak indirectly – through any narrative alibi – in the first person'.[151] This development, Pasolini claims, constitutes a revival of the modernist silent cinema

> based on the aggressive presence of the camera: montage in Eisenstein, Pudovkin, or Abel Gance, camera movements in the expressionist or Kammerspiel films, the optical distortions and unusual angles in the films of the French 'avant-garde', Dreyer's close-ups in *The Passion of Joan of Arc*—in a word, the aesthetics that theoreticians like Epstein, Eisenstein, Balàzs, Arnheim, or Spotiswoode had in mind.[152]

As James Monaco notes, 'the innovators of the sixties often returned to the conventions of the silent film for models'.[153] Beckett similarly harks back to silent techniques, not only in *Film*, but also in his work for television – for instance, the use of dissolves and superimposition in *… but the clouds …,* or the gauze focus in the German film of *What Where* – as well as his theatre: as James Knowlson argues, the numerous wordless sequences in Beckett's work,

[148] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London: Athlone Press, 1989), 274.
[149] Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Athlone Press, 1983), 83.
[150] Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'The Cinema of Poetry', in eds John Orr and Olga Taxidou, *Post-War Cinema and Modernity* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 51.
[151] Ibid., 53.
[152] Ibid., 58.
[153] James Monaco, *Alain Resnais* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 55.

the extended sequences of mime, as in *Endgame, Krapp's Last Tape, Act Without Words,* and the intensity of the close-ups of the mute listening face in *Eh Joe, Film, That Time,* 'almost certainly resulted from his long-standing interest in silent film'.[154]

Beckett did not write and direct films and theatre in isolation, I will argue, but within a context of modernist filmmaking animated by concerns to foreground the embodied presence of the camera, the use of asynchronous sound and gesture, and the lost tradition of the silent film. Recent work by scholars has situated Beckett within certain historical and aesthetic contexts, reading his work against the tendency which abstracts or isolates it from post-war French cultural movements. Pascale Casanova argues for Beckett as a writer who actively sought to 'participate in the Parisian "factory" of modernity […] the international capital of artists who refused to submit to a national vision'. That Beckett remained fully committed to living in Paris and to defending 'the art produced there' is of fundamental importance to his work.[155] Anna McMullan and Ulrika Maude have demonstrated the convergences between Beckett and Merleau Ponty by revealing the historical, aesthetic and philosophical contexts they had in common: 'though there is no evidence that Merleau-Ponty directly influenced Beckett […] both attended the École Normale Superieuré at a similar time, both were profoundly affected by World War II and both were working through the legacies of dualist philosophies'.[156] Beckett's work both 'invites yet stubbornly resists contextualization', as demonstrated by the recent collection of essays edited by Anthony Uhlmann, entitled *Beckett in Context.* For Shane Weller, 'Beckett's relation to his cultural context in post-war Paris was […] essentially ambiguous'. On the one hand, his publication in Sartre and De Beauvoir's journal *Les Temps Modernes,* and his admiration for Sartre's *Nausea* (1938) – 'extraordinarily good'[157] – and Camus' *The Outsider* – 'important'[158] – place him, for many critics, within the context of French existentialism; yet Beckett sought 'assiduously to remove' his work from any identifiable cultural context, and to resist 'various literary-philosophical-isms, not least existentialism and absurdism'. While his 'post-war work undoubtedly bears traces of that context', Weller argues against 'any such straightforward contextualising': it is 'rather, a matter of conjunctions that never quite settle into comfortably stable structures

[154] Knowlson, *Images of Beckett*, 123.
[155] Quoted in Shane Weller, 'Post-World War Two Paris', in ed. Uhlmann, *Samuel Beckett in Context*, 160–172; 170.
[156] McMullan, *Performing Embodiment*, 10.
[157] Beckett to Thomas McGreevy, 26 May 1938, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett,* vol. 1, 626.
[158] Beckett to George Reavey, 27 May 1946, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett,* vol. 2, 32.

of determinable influence'.[159] Yet it is only by considering those contexts that one can develop a sense of the particular aesthetic character of Beckett's resistance, and of the traces of those contexts which that resistance still bears. While there is a growing amount of scholarship on Beckett's relation to post-war philosophy, the visual arts and literature, there is as yet no extended study of Beckett's relation, and indeed resistance, to post-war modernist cinema.

Beckett was clearly aware of the 'young cinéastes', as he called the *Cahiers du Cinéma* group, in a 1959 letter to John Manning, written soon after the release of Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, a film which, along with Truffaut's *Les Quatre Cents Coup*, marked the beginning of the nouvelle vague. Several members of the nouvelle vague – François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol, Eric Rohmer, Jacques Rivette – began their careers as critics writing for *Cahiers du Cinéma,* the film journal founded in 1951 by André Bazin, the spiritual father of a group which also included the 'Left bank' filmmakers Alain Resnais, Chris Marker and Agnes Varda. Bazin, as Dorota Ostrowska notes, 'referred frequently to the times of silent cinema, especially the avant-garde of the 1920s, the proliferation of the cineclubs and film journalism of that period. He wanted sound cinema to generate the same level of excitement and debate as silent cinema did'.[160]

Beckett's letters include several references to Resnais – 'I have met Resnais, the most gifted of the lot [the French New Wave] probably though his Hiroshima was not satisfactory. Nuit et Brouillard was very fine'[161] – and a brief mention of Godard, in a letter about the remake of *Film*: 'Cameraman Raoul Coutard, Godard's cameraman'.[162] He corresponded on several occasions with Richard Roud, the founder of the New York film festival in 1963, the London correspondent for *Cahiers du Cinéma* and a close acquaintance and biographer of Henri Langlois, the founder of the Cinématèque Française. Langlois had, by the end of the war, amassed one of the world's largest collections of films, from the earliest years of cinema. From the 1930s to 70s, Langlois modelled his project, which involved preserving, collecting and exhibiting films at the Cinémathèque, on the film clubs of the first wave of film modernism. He significantly helped to preserve silent films by Jacques Feyder, Cecil B. De

[159] Weller, 'Post-World War Two Paris', 162.

[160] Dorota Ostrowska, *Reading the French New Wave: Critics, Writers and Art Cinema in France* (London: Wallflower Press, 2008), 21.

[161] Beckett to John Manning, 15 October 1959, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, vol. 3: 1957–1965*, eds George Craig, Martha Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 246.

[162] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 1 February 1983, Harmon, *No Author Better Served*, 442.

Mille, Keaton, D.W. Griffith, Pabst, Von Sternberg, Dovzhenko, Pudovkin, Renoir, Delluc and Dulac; the Cinémathèque screened films which would have been destroyed or otherwise lost. Even James Joyce was said to be a frequent attender of the Cinémathèque.[163] As Abel Gance put it:

> It is thanks to Langlois that some of my earlier films were saved from destruction: Mater Dolorosa, The Tenth Symphony, Les Gaz Mortels, The Right to Life, Barberousse, and especially La Roue in its 10,000 meter version. More important still, my 1927 Napoleon, all 26 reels with the final triple-screen sequence, would have disappeared.

Langlois' efforts greatly contributed to the revival of interest in silent cinema within the nouvelle vague, an attitude expressed in Godard's *Le Mépris* (1963): 'We must get back to the films of Griffith and Chaplin.' All of the key directors of the nouvelle vague have spoken of the formative importance of the regular screenings at the Cinématèque. For Resnais, Langlois was 'my idol. He made me discover films I couldn't see elsewhere.'[164] Jacques Rivette also expressed his debt to Langlois and the Cinématèque: 'I remember the avenue de Messine with its fifty seats, which were full only for L'Age d'Or, The Blue Angel, or Potemkin, Espagnole, and Pabst's Joyless Street.'[165]

My account of Beckett's technique, both in his filmmaking and in his theatre directing, draws on references in his letters, as well as archival material. While the letters contain telling indications of specific films Beckett had seen, they do not offer a comprehensive guide to his film-going. It is clear from his recently published letters that he continued to attend the cinema regularly throughout the fifties. In a 1951 letter, he writes 'Feel an urge to go to the cinema';[166] later that year, he remarks: 'Naturally we made straight for the cinema yesterday evening, Les Chaines du destin [*No Man of Her Own* (1950)], with Barbara Stanwyck. An affair of impersonation following a railway accident. I have never seen her so good, a few looks that showed extraordinary pathos.'[167] Here, 'naturally' suggests that cinema-going, while he lived in Paris, was a frequent and regular activity; that he had 'never seen [Stanwyck] so good' implies that he had seen her earlier films. But a reluctance to discuss the work of others becomes overtly apparent after the international success of *Godot*, and attendant requests for critical

[163] Richard Roud, *A Passion for Film: Henri Langlois and the Cinématèque Française* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1983), 28.
[164] Ibid., xxiv.
[165] Ibid., 27.
[166] Beckett to George Duthuit, 26 July 1951, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 2, 270.
[167] Ibid., 274.

explication, including discussion of possible source material and influences on his writing and directing. In a 1960 letter to Richard Seaver, who asked him what he thought of a manuscript, Beckett states that he would 'prefer my appreciations to remain private' and that he had 'no public comment to make on other writers. I've had to take a stand about this as about interviews, otherwise there's no end to it'.[168] His letters are reliable guides only up to a point, and there are elements of my argument which are speculative: for instance, I believe Beckett saw Hitchcock's *Psycho*, based on a close comparative analysis of *Eh Joe*, though he does not mention Hitchcock in his correspondence. I also highlight Beckett's contact with film culture by showing striking parallels between particular innovations in cinematic technique and his own dramaturgical or cinematic methods.

In a response to John Manning's request for articles on the incipient nouvelle vague, he mentions that he will 'consult friends in the swim and try and dig up something for you':[169] my account also relies on the involvement of those of his friends, collaborators, directors and technicians who were 'in the swim' as regards contemporary film culture, and who kept him informed during a period of intense preoccupation with his own work. For instance, he maintained a friendship and correspondence with the film critic Peter Lennon for fifteen years from the early sixties; Lennon was immersed in the milieux of the nouvelle vague, and directed a feature film, *Rocky Road to Dublin* (1968), shot by Godard's cameraman, Raoul Coutard. One of Beckett's closest collaborators, Alan Schneider, often discusses recent cinema with Beckett: Fellini, when he directs a musical version of *La Strada* in 1969,[170] and Antonioni and Godard, amongst others, in his account of the making of *Film*. Marin Karmitz, with whom Beckett co-directed the film of *Comédie* in 1966, had worked with Rosselini, Godard, and Duras and regarded *Comédie* as marking 'an incredible moment in the functioning of the French culture, which has not been dealt with as much as it should; the Nouveau Roman, Beckett's and Ionesco's theatre […] the Nouvelle Vague in cinema'.[171] For Karmitz, this moment in French culture depended on a 'constant complicity' between 'filmmakers', 'writers' and 'a number of editors and producers': working with Beckett, as with Duras, marked an extension of this complicity and, as Karmitz puts it, Beckett and he 'went very far in the process

[168] Beckett to Richard Seaver, 30 January 1960, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 3, 286.
[169] Ibid., 246.
[170] Alan Schneider to Beckett, 18 September 1969, Harmon, *No Author Better Served*, 227.
[171] Interview with Elisabeth Lebovici, in Caroline Bourgeois (ed.), *Comédie/Marin Karmitz/Samuel Beckett* (Paris: Editions du Regard, 2001), 70–76; 70.

of a common relationship'.[172] The editor of *Comédie,* Jean Ravel, edited Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962); Beckett also maintained a correspondence for many years with the editor of *Film*, Sydney Meyers, who imported modernist editing techniques to America and was instrumental in the formation of American independent cinema. Boris Kaufman, who shot *Film,* also worked with Jean Vigo and Sidney Lumet (Beckett mentions seeing *L'Atlante* (1934) and *The Pawnbroker* (1964)).[173] This complicity with the culture of filmmaking extends to his close working relationships with certain actors: Beckett insisted on casting Delphine Seyrig – one of his 'favourite actresses'[174] – for the film of *Comédie*, and he worked with her again in the 1978 Théâtre d'Orsay production of *Footfalls*; Seyrig was one of the most central and recognizable actors of the modernist film scene, working with Resnais, Buñuel, Chantal Akerman and Duras.

Beckett's associations with the group of writers who shared his French publisher, *Les Éditions des Minuits*, under the management of Jerome Lindon – a group known as the nouveau roman – also connects him to the nouvelle vague. As Marie Smart notes, 'The Nouveau Roman group was linked to Beckett through Lindon, and it was likely out of respect for his publisher's long-standing support that Beckett was willing to associate himself with the movement'.[175] Two of the most important writers at *Minuits*, Alain Robbe-Grillet and Marguerite Duras, also wrote scripts for two films which were central to the nouvelle vague, *L'année dernière à Marienbad* (1962) and *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1958), and both writers also maintained parallel careers as film directors. Beckett saw both films on their release, and personally knew and admired both Robbe-Grillet and Duras. In an early article on the nouveau roman in a 1958 special issue of *Esprit*, ten writers were identified as belonging to the group, including Robbe-Grillet, Pinget, Duras and Beckett himself.[176] The writers at *Minuits* shared certain formal and aesthetic principles, including the refusal of traditional forms of the novel and the development of new forms of narrative and characterization based on a method of heightened attention to objects and surfaces often described as cinematic.

The nouveau roman and the nouvelle vague were powerfully affiliated from the late fifties and throughout the sixties. The influence of the *Minuits* writers on the filmmakers was so fundamental that Truffaut called the new

[172] Ibid., 71.
[173] Beckett to Barbara Bray, 6 July 1964, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett,* vol. 3, 606.
[174] Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, 657.
[175] Marie Smart, 'New Novel, Old Tune: Beckett and Pinget in Postwar France', *Modernism/Modernity*, 21.2 (2014), 529–546; 532.
[176] Ostrowska, *Reading the French New Wave*, 90.

wave the 'cinéma des Éditions de Minuit'.[177] Many of the filmmakers of the nouvelle vague began their careers as critics at *Cahiers du Cinéma*, where the new claims for cinema were based on a desire to make film the equal of modern literature; these young critics forged a close association with recent innovations in the novel, and with ideas of a new canon based on the 'camera-stylo', the film director as auteur, and a refusal of traditional forms. Agnes Varda called the new cinema a form of 'cinécriture';[178] Resnais remarked that he wanted to create a 'novelistic cinema', and that with *Hiroshima* he 'wanted to bring into being the equivalent of a new form of reading, so that the spectator would have as much freedom of imagination as the reader of a novel'.[179] The writers of the nouveau roman, in turn, were powerfully influenced by cinema. Roland Barthes wrote as early as 1954 that Robbe-Grillet's optical prose style, in novels such as *Les Gommes* and *La Jalousie*, with its neutral, camera-like focus on objects and surfaces, is fundamentally cinematic.[180] Robbe-Grillet, the chief theorist of the nouveau roman, stated that, for the writers of this group,

> it isn't the objectivity of the camera that enthuses them, but its possibilities in the domain of the subjective, of the imaginary. They don't conceive of cinema as a means of expression, but of research, and what most claims their attention is, naturally, what was most lacking in the means of literature: namely […] the possibility of acting on two senses at once, the eye and the ear.[181]

Robbe-Grillet also wrote an essay on *Godot* in 1953, which Beckett described as 'excellent, by far the best I have read'; he read *La Jalousie* in 1959 and thought it 'very important and remarkable'.[182] Robbe-Grillet began to direct his own films in 1963, after the success of *Marienbad*; along with Jean Cayrol, who wrote Resnais' *Nuit et Brouillard,* which Beckett thought was 'very fine',[183] and Marguerite Duras, these writers turned to film directing as an extension of their experiments in prose, and in the process generated a shared cultural network which allowed for mutual interactions between literature and cinema. Duras consistently expressed a deep respect for Robert Bresson, especially *Pickpocket* (1959), and described

[177] Jean-Michel Frodon, *l'Âge moderne du cinéma français* (Paris: Flammarion, 1995), 28.
[178] Ostrowska, *Reading the French New Wave*, 10.
[179] Ibid., 10.
[180] Roland Barthes, *Critical Essays*, trans. Richard Howard (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), 182.
[181] Alain Robbe-Grillet, quoted in Jean-Louis Leutrat, *Last Year At Marienbad*, trans. Paul Hammond (London: BFI Publishing, 2000), 17.
[182] Beckett to Barbara Bray, 26 March 1959, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 3, 222.
[183] Ibid., 246.

Godard as 'le plus grand catalyseur du cinéma mondial';[184] Godard spoke highly of her work, particularly *Le Camion,*[185] and included her recorded voice in *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* (1980). Beckett's long-standing admiration for Duras began in 1957 on reading, hearing on the radio, then seeing on stage her play *Le Square*, which he found 'overwhelmingly moving', 'quite extraordinary' and 'an infinitely affecting text'.[186] Beckett continued to encounter Duras' work, partly through his contact with Barbara Bray, his close friend and lover, 'the only person with whom he regularly shared his work in progress and one of the very few with whom he discussed his work at all';[187] Bray had developed a close professional friendship with Duras, and translated many of her works into English (Beckett would occasionally offer feedback and comments on her translations).

Duras' first film as director, *Nuit noire, Calcutta* (1964), was co-directed, as with the film of *Comédie*, by Marin Karmitz. She went on to direct nineteen films, and many of these films employ theatricality as one of their aesthetic modes; for instance, she called *India Song* (1975) a 'texte théâtre film'. *India Song* is renowned for its radical separation of off-screen voice and image, and its refusal of synchronized speech, techniques she pioneered in her work with Resnais on *Hiroshima Mon Amour.* The separation or asynchronicity of voice and image is a technique, as Paul Sheehan notes, which is 'common to all of Beckett's works for television',[188] and it is also a principal feature of his stage dramaturgy, from *Krapp's Last Tape* onwards. My study compares the separation of speech from image in Beckett with the use of asynchronous sound in French modernist film. As Kovács observes, the second wave modernist film 'tended to separate the information conveyed by the soundtrack from that conveyed by the images. Increasingly, soundtracks became an independent channel of information rather than a subordinate explanatory or accompanying element'.[189] It is a technique which marks the fulfilment of Eisenstein and Pudovkin's prescription in 1928 that film sound 'must be directed towards its pronounced non-coincidence with the visual images […] This method of attack only will produce the requisite sensation, which will lead in course of time to the creation of a new "orchestral counterpoint" of sight-images and sound-images'.[190] For Eisenstein, it is this

[184] Quoted in Renate Guenther, *Marguerite Duras* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 17.
[185] Ibid., 17.
[186] *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 2, 13, 15, 146.
[187] Marek Kędzierski, 'Barbara Bray: In Her Own Words', *Modernism/Modernity*, 18.4 (2011), 889.
[188] Paul Sheehan, 'Beckett's Ghost Dramas: Monitoring a Phenomenology of Sleep', in eds Ulrika Maude and Matthew Feldman, *Beckett and Phenomenology* (New York: Continuum, 2009), 164.
[189] Kovács, *Screening Modernism,* 298.
[190] Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandroff, 'The Sound Film', repr. *Close Up*, 84.

counterpoint, in contrast to the 'merely naturalistic passive sound recording' of synchronized talking pictures, which constitutes 'the true material of the sound-film', and which could enable the cinematic equivalent of the Joycean interior monologue: the potential of the '"internal monologue" […] in connexion with cinematography' resides in the cinematic translation of the ' "inward monologues" of Leopold Bloom, in James Joyce's wonderful "Ulysses" '.[191] In his account of the unfilmed adaptation of Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, published in *Close Up* in 1933, a film halted in part by executives at Paramount Studios and their insistence on straightforward sound-image continuity, Eisenstein outlines a Joycean vision of an interior monologue involving a 'black screen and interspersed with accelerated images over silence', of asynchronous 'polyphonic sounds' and 'images',[192] a method which would 'photograph what was going on inside Clyde's mind'.[193] For Eisenstein, 'the sound-film is capable of reconstructing all phases and all specifics of the course of thought';[194] it is modelled on both the laws of visual montage and the Joycean method of interior monologue. In the script for *An American Tragedy*, interior monologue combines with associative imagery in a method which is comparable, as David Bordwell notes, to 'the subjective sound employed by Hitchcock (*Blackmail*, 1929) and Lang (*M*, 1931)', though *Ulysses* was the chief technical inspiration.[195] At the Film School he established in Moscow in 1931, he taught students of cinematography to translate Bloom's monologues into film language,[196] in rhythmic alternations of audible speech and expressive movement.

The silent film revival in the sixties galvanized the development of this technique, as filmmakers rediscovered both Eisenstein's pronouncements on contrapuntal sound and the power of the asynchronous silent image. Eisenstein's vision of asynchronicity, forged in his encounter with Joyce, becomes a guiding principle during the rediscovery of the modernist project in the cinema of the sixties and seventies. While there is nothing comparable in the television of the period, the split between sound and image, and Beckett's employment of what Michel Chion calls the 'acousmatic' voice – the voice which is heard while its cause or source remains unseen – is much closer to techniques

[191] Eisenstein, 'An American Tragedy', *Close Up*, 10.2 (June 1933), 120.

[192] Eisenstein, 'A Course in Treatment', 103, 105.

[193] Ibid.,120.

[194] Ibid., 103, 105.

[195] Bordwell, *Eisenstein*, 18.

[196] Marie Seton mentions looking through Eisenstein's copy of *Ulysses* in spring 1934 and finding Bloom's interior monologues 'broken down into a rough shooting script' by means of pencil margin notes. Seton, *Sergei M. Eisenstein: A Biography*, 290.

in the cinema of the period. Critical scholarship on Beckett's television, I would argue, excludes a full reckoning of the sustained influence of cinema on his work for the screen. Clas Zilliacus' seminal *Beckett and Broadcasting* (1976), Graley Herren's *Samuel Beckett's Plays on Film and Television* (2007) and Jonathan Bignell's *Beckett on Screen* (2009) place his television work almost exclusively within the context and institutional culture of the BBC in England and Süddeutscher Rundfunk (SDR) in West Germany. These studies foreground the importance of the television studio, with its particular scenic layout and technical facilities, despite the pronounced anachronism of Beckett's work in schedules dominated by social realist drama. Bignell argues that 'making *Eh Joe* on videotape has a range of meanings and contexts; and among them, its status as television rather than cinema or theatre produces interesting tensions between its dramatic form, its technologies of production and the ways it can be interpreted'.[197] Yet Beckett's work stubbornly resists the broadcasting contexts of television history, as Bignell admits in his wide-ranging scrutiny of broadcasting contexts at the BBC. *Eh Joe* was 'the only new play on BBC 2 in summer 1966 that was not part of an anthology series'[198] and the works for television which followed also 'looked increasingly anomalous as anthology strands such as *The Wednesday Play* and *Play for Today* became the dominant vehicles within BBC schedules for original dramas'.[199] Without fully eliding the differences between film and television, I would modify Bignell's view by claiming that what makes Beckett's TV so distinct and anomalous is precisely its resort to techniques active in the anti-realist cinema of the period, which Beckett first encountered during the making of *Film* and *Comédie.* In this view, Beckett's late aesthetic of asynchrony, its dialectic of the live and the recorded, of presence and absence, in his theatre as well as his television films for the BBC and SDR, together with his adaptation of *Comédie, Krapp's Last Tape* and *What Where* to film, are fundamentally altered by his work for the screen, and by his formative encounter with the modernist film culture of the period.

[197] Bignell, *Beckett on Screen*, 27.
[198] Ibid., 57.
[199] Ibid., 55.

1

Late Keaton, Docufiction, the Nouvelle Vague

In *Film*, Buster Keaton plays two characters called E and O, or Eye and Object. We see the entire film either through the eyes of E, or the eyes of O. E spends the film in pursuit of O, who does not want to be seen. He is in flight from perception, or what the script calls 'the agony of perceivedness'. We see E for the first time in the final scene, when O looks directly at E, and we realize that E is O's mirror opposite, that E and O are both Keaton. The film is simultaneously a silent Buster Keaton chase comedy, and also a disquisition on apperception and the split-subject: the script begins with a philosophical proposition, Berkeley's 'esse est percipi' – 'to be is to be perceived' – an idea which the film employs as scaffolding – of 'structural and dramatic convenience'[1] – for its investigation into film form. In this respect, as with its sense of the renewed urgency and relevance of the silent film, Beckett's film belongs to two contexts: the end of silent film and modernism's resistance to the coming of the talkies, and the exploration of the limits and conditions of the medium in the second wave modernism of the sixties.

Film demonstrates an ease of reference to silent film history and theory, from the pre-narrative chase films of the early 1900s, to recalcitrance and eventual defeat by sound technology. Beckett's foregrounding of the camera eye as an observer figure harks back to early film theory's distinction between theatre and cinema. For early writers on cinema, such as Hugo Münsterberg and Rudolph Arnheim, cinema distinguished itself from theatre by incorporating the perspective of a single, mobile spectator. The most sustained formulation of this idea, as David Bordwell points out, is found in Pudovkin's 1926 monograph *Film Technique*, which Beckett studied in 1936. The camera lens, in Pudovkin's view, embodies the perspective of an implied witness or observer; the director

[1] Beckett, *Film*, in *The Complete Dramatic Works* (London: Faber & Faber, 1986), 323. All references to Beckett's drama, both stage and screen, are to this edition, and are included parenthetically within the text.

forces the audience 'to see as the attentive observer saw' and corresponds to 'the attention of an imaginary observer'.[2] In its wider implications, Pudovkin's formulation defines the classical construction of space and continuity according to the principle of an imaginary witness whose field of view determines the angle and distance of the camera from the action; but it also implies an embodied perspective based on a cognate relation between the movement of the camera and the movement of a body through space. It is this secondary connotation in Pudovkin's formulation which inflects Beckett's self-reflexive notion that 'E is the cutter, O is the panner'[3] and the correlation in *Film* between the camera eye's field of view and the presence of an embodied witness.

The interconnectedness between mechanical and human vision is announced in the film's opening shot of an extreme close-up of Keaton's eye. The close-up is of crucial importance in silent film writing and practice, from Arnheim's view that 'the true virtue' of the delimited image appears from the 'close-up'[4] to Bela Balász's extended argument that it is the close-up which clearly distinguishes film from theatre. As Enoch Brater points out, the opening close-up of Keaton's eye is an 'oblique reference' to the slicing open of a young woman's eyeball in Buñuel and Dali's *Un Chien Andalou* (1929). The opening shot also suggests a reference to the superimposition of a close-up of an eye and a camera lens in Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), a film Beckett had very likely seen, given the fact that the cinematographer of *Film* was also Dziga Vertov's younger brother. Vertov's rejection of classical narrative and spatial construction is expressed in the emphasis he places on the determining conditions and idealized perfectibility of a hybrid mechanical-human eye able to perceive details otherwise invisible to the human eye. As with Beckett, Vertov asserts the structural importance of an analogy between the human eye and the camera shutter; yet these structural similarities between the two films invite ironic comparison. While Vertov's Kino Eye, aiming to free itself from 'human immobility' and from 'the limits of time and space', able to 'move apace […] ascend […] plunge and soar',[5] employs a range of techniques, from acceleration, reverse and slow motion, montage, multiple exposures, telescopic and microscopic lenses to embody the enhanced vision of a liberated machine-human hybrid, Beckett's camera eye, weary, myopic, all-

[2] David Bordwell, *Narration and the Fiction Film* (London: Routledge, 1985), 9.

[3] S.E. Gontarski, *The Intent of Undoing in Samuel Beckett's Dramatic Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 245.

[4] Rudolph Arnheim, *Film*, trans. L.M.Skieveking and Ian F.D. Morrow (London: Faber and Faber, 1933), 187.

[5] Vertov, 'Kino-Eye Manifesto' (1923), in ed. Annette Michelson and trans. Kevin O'Brien, *Kino-Eye: the Writings of Dziga Vertov* (London: Pluto, 1984), 14–15.

too-human, deliberately withholds technique, employing only a lens gauze to signal the weakness of O's vision. The camera eye in *Film*, as Anna McMullan notes, is 'aging, clumsy, tragic-comic'.[6] Beckett cross-breeds the modernist self-consciousness of Vertov with the generic template of the silent comedy, and the result is a deeply ironized version of Vertov's mechanized, constructivist athleticism.

As scholars have observed, it is silent comedy – 'climate of film comic and unreal' (323) – which is the film's generic template. Brater mentions the significance of slapstick comedy,[7] as does Linda Ben-Zvi, noting the crucial reference to 'early Hollywood Keystone chase comedies built on an identification with either pursuer or perceived'.[8] Beckett invokes the tradition of Hollywood knockabout –O 'storms along in a comic foundered precipitancy' – such as Mack Sennett's Keystone comedies of the 1910s and early Chaplin. A seventy-five-year-old Chaplin was the first choice for the role, but he was 'totally inaccessible': this possibly suggests that Beckett intended an aged, laborious version of Chaplin's walk during the composition of *Film*. His well-documented familiarity with Chaplin is apparent from his first attempts at work for the stage at Trinity College, Dublin, in 1931, when Beckett suggested the title *Le Kid*, conflating Corneille's *Le Cid* with Chaplin's *The Kid* (1921). During his first meeting with Joyce, they both discussed their 'deep fondness' for Chaplin, and later went to see *Modern Times* together.[9] When he reviewed Sean O'Casey's *Windfalls,* he expressed a strong preference for the 'comic' over the 'mievre' or sentimental Chaplin.[10] Doodles of Chaplin adorn the manuscripts of *Murphy, Watt and Malone Dies.* In the fifties, he wrote to Adam Tarn, favourably citing the 'Chaplinesque' qualities in a 1957 *Godot* production in Warsaw.[11] The Tramp persona leaves its distinct imprint throughout Beckett's novels and plays; for instance, the routine with the bananas in Chaplin's *Work* (1915) finds new life at the beginning of *Krapp's Last Tape*.

O 'storms along in a comic foundered precipitancy' and 'should invite laughter by his way of moving' (323), suggesting the slapstick routines of Harold Lloyd, Keaton, Laurel and Hardy, Ben Turpin, as well as Chaplin, all

[6] Anna McMullan, *Performing Embodiment in Samuel Beckett* (London: Routledge, 2007), 82

[7] Enoch Brater, *Beyond Minimalism: Beckett's Late Style in the Theater* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 75–76.

[8] Linda Ben-Zvi, 'Samuel Beckett's Media Plays', *Modern Drama*, 28 (1985), 22–37; 25.

[9] Beckett to Thomas McGreevy, 5 January 1938, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, vol. 1: 1929–1940*, eds Martha Fehsenfeld and Lois More Overbeck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 580.

[10] Samuel Beckett, 'The Essential and the Incidental', in *Disjecta* (London: John Calder, 1983), 82.

[11] Deidre Bair, *Samuel Beckett: A Biography* (London: Cape, 1978), 623–624, 453.

of whom Beckett had admired since his university years, and to whom he alludes throughout his early fiction and in *Godot*. *Watt*, for instance, mentions a 'hardy laurel'.[12] Michael North notes that a sequence in *Watt* prefigures the final moment of recognition of O: 'Watt stood in the kitchen, and the expression on his face became gradually of such vacancy that Micks, raising in amaze an astonished hand to a thunderstruck mouth, recoiled to the wall, and there stood, in a crouching posture.'[13] As Frederick Jameson argues, the pseudo-couple relationship in which one figure pursues the other, as in *Film*, runs throughout Beckett's work. At the beginning of *Mercier and Camier*, and again later in the novel, the two companions fail to meet at the appointed place several times, before finally encountering each other; one arrives, forestalled by the other, who waits, then departs, before the other arrives and 'resumes his vigil.'[14] It is a slow-motion version of a routine in slapstick comedy, animated by an account of the precise timing on which the comic energy of the sequence depends: 'Almost at the same moment, not precisely, that wouldn't work, almost, a little sooner, a little later, no importance, hardly any, Camier executes the same manoeuvre […] Then gradually he rises and the other sits, and so on, you see the gag.'[15] Beckett's fascination with slapstick routines culminates in the clowning, the grotesque choreography of gestures, and cross-talk, the 'difficulties with trousers', 'hat-juggling, and tree-imitating of *Godot*.

What Beckett admired in slapstick routines, as Laura Salisbury argues, was their transgression and interruption of the mechanics of narrative through an excess of percussive or recursive logic.[16] As Robert Knopff notes, in silent comic films, a gag very rarely advances a storyline or a narrative 'horizontally'; instead, 'the story seems to be treading water in one place as the gag transpires'.[17] But Beckett's allusions to the repetitive routines of Hollywood slapstick are not straightforward homage. While appropriating the formal shape of slapstick, Beckett's deliberately unvariable, exhausted comic timing often counteracts the energy of the routine. A confrontation between Mercier and Camier and a policeman begins by imitating the outward shape of a routine from Mack Sennett's Keystone Cops or Chaplin: after the constable

[12] Samuel Beckett, *Watt* (London: Picador, [1953] 1988), 22.
[13] Michael North, *Machine Age Comedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 151.
[14] Samuel Beckett, *Mercier and Camier* (London: Picador, [1974] 1988), 8.
[15] Ibid., 104–105.
[16] Laura Salisbury, *Beckett's Laughing Matters: Comedy, Time and Form in the Prose and Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 191.
[17] Robert Knopf, *The Theater and Cinema of Buster Keaton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 12.

deals Camier a 'violent smack', Mercier raises his right foot and launches it 'clumsily but with force among the testicles'.[18] In a Hollywood routine, the violence would occur without consequence; Beckett distorts the purely comic shape of the routine by overemphasizing the violence until it tips over into appalling savagery: Camier kicks off the policeman's helmet and clubs the policeman's skull 'with all his might, again and again', before Mercier takes the truncheon and resumes beating his skull: 'Who knows, he mused, perhaps that was the finishing touch', the implication being that they have beaten the policeman to death.

Similarly, as Laura Salisbury argues, the hat-swapping sequence between Vladimir and Estragon is not a straightforward homage to a sequence in the Marx Bros' *Duck Soup* (1933), a film which Beckett admired.[19] While Chico and Harpo demonstrate mastery and control by incorporating deliberate interruptions, skilfully varying the tempo of the routine as it accelerates towards the crescendo of its punchline, Vladimir and Estragon seem to be 'puppets controlled by the gag rather than agents within the comic scene'.[20] The 'rapid and uninterrupted' quality of the routine, as Beckett puts it in his revised text for the Schiller-Theater production,[21] signals unvarying speed and deadpan repetition, as distinct from the expressive variation in *Duck Soup*. Beckett deflates the energy of a routine which refuses the accelerating pace which rises towards a climax, collapsing instead into compulsive, obstinate repetition. His deliberately mistimed routines undermine the performative display of mastery in the classic slapstick routine, where failure is redeemed by the skill of the execution. In *Film*, O's 'comic foundered precipitancy' does not specifically invoke the Chaplin shuffle; it suggests instead an exhausted, stumbling, graceless imitation, as with the protagonist in *The Expelled*:

> I set off. What a gait. Stiffness of the lower limbs, as if nature had denied me knees, extraordinary splaying of the feet to right and left of the line of march. The trunk, on the contrary, as if by the effect of a compensatory mechanism, was as flabby as an old ragbag, tossing wildly to the unpredictable jolts of the pelvis.[22]

[18] Beckett, *Mercier and Camier*, 92, 93.
[19] James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), 609.
[20] Salisbury, *Beckett's Laughing Matters*, 190.
[21] Ibid., 189.
[22] 'The Expelled', in ed. S.E. Gontarski, *The Complete Short Prose, 1929–1989* (New York: Grove Press, 1995), 50.

The description registers the splayed foot of Chaplin, but a clumsy loss of equilibrium replaces Chaplin's balletic grace. Beckett's comic walks, O's included, have stiffened from an excess of self-consciousness, an inability to perform an automatic movement without the paralysing fear of being observed. As the figure in *The Expelled* remarks, while failing to observe his own proscription, 'a man must walk without paying attention to what he's doing'.[23] Similarly, Watt's

> way of advancing due east, for example, was to turn his bust as far as possible towards the north and at the same time to fling out his right leg as far as possible towards the south, and then to turn his bust as far as possible towards the south and at the same time to fling out his left leg as far as possible towards the north, and then again to turn his bust as far as possible towards the north and to fling out his right leg as far as possible towards the south.[24]

As Hugh Kenner puts it, the 'strange detachment with which Beckett's people regard the things their hands and feet do' and 'their tendency to analyse their own motions'[25] short-circuits the flow of intention from mind to body. The element of O's 'precipitancy', defined by the O.E.D. as 'rapid onward movement' or 'headlong descent or fall', combines the strong downward pull of Watt's walk, each step stopping just short of a fall, with the swift advance of the lead character in *The Calmative*: 'I quickened my step with the result I swept forward as if on rollers.' O's 'way of moving' has stiffened into a mere stagger, its Chaplinesque grace gone out of mind.

O's 'comic foundered precipitancy', as written, signals an exhausted, stumbling, graceless Chaplinesque shuffle, but it is the crucial effect of the Keaton persona which enables *Film* to achieve its particular effects. As Jonathan Bignell points out, 'the splitting and doubling of the central character, a 1920s setting, the use of black-and-white film and the narrative form of the chase are alluded to in *Film* and support a mode of viewing oriented around Keaton's star image'.[26] The composite time zone of *Film* is an aspect of the double presence of Keaton, of the invincible actor-star of the twenties and the faded icon of the sixties. In 1929 Keaton made his last silent film, *Spite Marriage,* and it marked the beginning of his protracted decline, and the decimation of his silent screen persona at the hands of MGM Studios. The studio heads forced Keaton to fill

[23] Ibid.
[24] Beckett, *Watt*, 28.
[25] Hugh Kenner, *Samuel Beckett: A Critical Study* (John Calder: London, 1961), 84.
[26] Jonathan Bignell, *Beckett on Screen: The Television Plays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 135.

his films with dialogue, and disallowed sustained physical performance; only ever average as a verbal comedian, he never again regained his foothold as a performer. When Schneider first met Keaton in 1963, he found him playing four-hand poker by himself. Keaton quipped that he was playing an imaginary game with Irvin Thalberg and Nick Schenck, the bosses of MGM, and that this game had been going on since 1927. *Film*'s only audible sound, 'sssh!' (325), might also be uttered at Keaton, or by him, when the talkies begin. It demands a return to silence, just as it denies the technical capacity of the sound track. During pre-production, Beckett signalled a crucial awareness of the film's Keatonian aspect: 'Keaton kept mentioning his flattened down Stetson hat being his trademark (perhaps Sam asked him). Sam replied that he didn't see why Keaton couldn't wear his own hat in this one.'[27] The flattened down Stetson, tipped at a slight angle, remains a sure trademark of the Keaton persona. In *Our Hospitality* (1923), he is seen slyly acknowledging this to the camera, as he is in *Steamboat Bill Jr.* (1928), where we see him in a frontal shot, observing his mirror image as he tries on a variety of hats in a clothing store. When he arrives at the porkpie hat, the moment of self-recognition in the mirror is a tiny anticipation of O's final look in *Film*. Beckett would have been familiar with the unmistakable connotations of the hat, and the Keaton persona in general. By deliberately including the Stetson, Beckett permitted the inclusion of a pseudo-documentary effect which summons the ruined grandeur of the Keaton persona.

As Hugh Kenner notes, Beckett's writing is rich with 'Keatonian detail'.[28] The final scene in *The End* where the character comes to grief in a leaking boat alludes to *The Love Nest* (1923), and *The Boat* (1921).[29] As an undergraduate he devoured Keaton films. James Knowlson mentions *Sherlock Jr.* (1924), *The Navigator* (1924), *Go West* (1925), *Battling Butler* (1926), *The General* (1927) and 'earlier shorts'.[30] When Beckett responded to the 'desperation over the casting crisis by suggesting Buster Keaton' he was already the fourth choice, after Chaplin, Zero Mostel and Jack McGowran.[31] Keaton had been offered the part of Lucky in the original American production of *Godot,* but turned it down, and this may have prevented him from being first choice, for Alan

[27] Alan Schneider, 'On Directing *Film*', *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'Hui* 4, ed. Catherina Wulf (1995), 35, 30, 31, 33.

[28] Hugh Kenner, *A Reader's Guide to Samuel Beckett* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973), 117.

[29] Samuel Beckett, 'The End' (1954), in ed. Gontarski, *The Complete Short Prose, 1929–1989* (New York: Grove Press, 1995), 96.

[30] Knowlson, *Damned to Fame,* 57.

[31] Schneider, 'On Directing *Film*', 30.

Schneider at least. According to Schneider, these early casting decisions were decisions made on Beckett's behalf, 'in keeping with Sam's script', rather than authorial imperatives. Beckett intervenes in order to suggest Keaton, whose eventual assumption of O and E, I will argue, represents a fulfilment of tendencies in the script.[32] The film's effect is enhanced and strengthened if we consider the effect of the Keaton persona, or what Stanley Cavell calls 'the natural result of a star's successive incarnations'. For Cavell, the history of an actor-star's persona is an element of 'what the movies they are in are about. So an account of the paths of stars across their various films must form part of the internal history of the world of cinema'.[33] During the 1960s, as Cavell observes, many of the actor-stars who had helped fix the medium had aged, and we could see them on screen as having aged. *Film*'s self-reflexive exploration of its medium, its physical basis, conditions and limits, in addition to its exploration of the presence of the camera, also includes a unique investigation into the visible mortality of its actor-star.

According to James Karen, who plays a passer-by in *Film,* Beckett 'was really in on the direction and the production of the film. He was a hard taskmaster, he was very difficult – he had an idea, a picture in mind, and he wanted it that way. I remember him saying "Can't you blink five frames less?"'[34] Beckett allowed Keaton his hat, or asked him to wear it, knowing this would clarify the representation, old and burnt out by 1963, of the Keaton screen persona. Given Beckett's growing propensity for absolute economy and control, this is implausible as mere capitulation. David Clark's revised version of *Film* (1979), which assumes the easy replaceability of the Keaton role, turns a blind eye to Beckett's intentions in allowing, or asking, Keaton to play himself. There is a palpable tension, aside from which the film becomes less articulate in its statement, between the history of the silent Keaton persona and Beckett's own 'acute *intentness*' (329). Keaton's photographed presence is further complicated since he is also the film's perceiving eye, the film's embodied camera presence, both the subject and object of study. As Cavell argues, it is photography which

[32] Aside from Bignell, the significance of the Keaton persona has been overlooked by critics of *Film.* See, for instance, Martin Dodsworth, '*Film* and the Religion of Art', in ed. Katherine Worth, *Beckett the Shape Changer* (London: Routledge, 1975), 161–183; Ruth Perlmutter, 'Beckett's *Film* and Beckett and Film', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 6.1 (1977), 83–94; Rosemary Poutney, 'Beckett and the Camera', *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'Hui*, 4 (1995), 41–52; Jonathan Kalb, 'The Mediated Quixote: The Radio and Television Plays, and *Film*', in ed. John Pilling, *The Cambridge Companion to Beckett* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 124–145.

[33] Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 71.

[34] James Karen, interview with Kevin Brownlow, 'Brownlow on Beckett (on Keaton)' (1986), http://ireland.iol.ie/~galfilm/filmwest/22brown.htm.

separates the stage and screen actor. The screen actor is essentially not an actor at all; he is the subject of study:

> 'Bogart' means 'the figure created in a given set of films.' His presence in those films is who he is, not merely in the sense in which a photograph of an event is that event; but in the sense that if those films did not exist, Bogart would not exist, the name 'Bogart' would not mean what it does.[35]

Keaton is both the mortally aged actor and 'Keaton', the figure or persona who only exists in his films. In this light, O's 'foundered' movement, in flight from 'extraneous perception' (323), pursued by his alter ego, acquires multiple significations. Beckett offers Keaton the ontological identity of the 'Keaton' of his silent films, but at the same time denies him, by rigid adherence to the script, the main resources of his comic expressiveness: the long unbroken take, the medium-long shots, the scope for improvisation and the nuances of the face, poker or otherwise.

Keaton's signature-tunes as director were the long shot and the long take, techniques which allow the rhythms of the performative body to be seen in its totality, and in relation to its environment. We see him from a distance negotiating the layout of a steamship in *The Navigator,* or the course of railroad tracks in *The General*. His films, like most silent comedies, originate in a tradition of vaudeville in which the physical virtuosity of the performer takes centre stage. Keaton's stunts are not simulated with doubles or editing. In most of his films, he wins the day after executing a set-piece physical feat timed to the second. Keaton's insistence on never using a body double becomes his stock-in-trade: the intended effect is to be seen performing without the mechanical obstructions of editing or stunt doubles, in contradistinction to his role as O, where he is 'striving not to be seen'.[36] The falling wall sequence in *Steamboat Bill Jr* (1928) places the camera far back enough to capture the house, filming in an unbroken take as the façade falls on him. Long shots give the performer a great deal more legroom, while the long take captures stunts in their entirety: both techniques show Keaton's physical feats 'constructed as a mise-en-scène, rather than by editing'.[37] In *Film,* Keaton's takes are broken by incessant cuts, in the switch from E's to O's perception – as Beckett suggested in pre-production meetings, 'E's the cutter and O's the panner'[38] – and in the mobility of E's gaze. O's comic precipitancy is cut short by the elderly couple E stops to observe; E

[35] Cavell, *World Viewed*, 43.

[36] Beckett, 'Notes for Film' and 'Percipi Notes', 5 April 1963, MS 1227/7/6/1, Beckett International Foundation: Reading University Library.

[37] Knopf, *The Theater and Cinema of Buster Keaton*, 9.

[38] Gontarski, *Intent of Undoing,* 187, 191.

registers O crouching at the foot of the stairs, then transfers his gaze to the stairs, lingering to observe the old lady (326).

Keaton's silent films seek to preserve the actor's spatial integrity from cutting-room procedures which fragment the body. His caution with editing technique is foregrounded in *Sherlock Jr*, in the scene where he falls asleep and watches his dreamt self walk up to the screen and into the projected film. The background locations shift in a rapid succession of short cuts; Keaton remains fixed in space as he struggles to keep up with the projected film's malevolent, rachitic continuity. *Sherlock Jr.* is Keaton's most self-reflexive comment on the nature of film as a physical medium, and of the performing body in conflict with the medium. This is also the basic situation in *Film.* E's attempts to trail O are reminiscent of Keaton's own efforts at shadowing his man in *Sherlock Jr*., especially in the scene where the camera follows the action intently as Keaton pursues his suspect just inches behind him. The performance in *Film* alludes to this steady pursuit, in combination with the dream sequence where his double battles against the hostile film apparatus. The latter sequence keeps the Keaton persona, as well as physique, fully intact; his double behaves just as he would. In *Film,* Keaton is in exile both from his persona and his own body. The camera is the spectator in pursuit of Keaton, but also Keaton in pursuit of himself: as pursuer, E attempts to get as close as possible, too close for comfort, both for O in flight from perception, and for Keaton, whose own style of performance filmmaking had relied on much longer shots.

Beckett remarked that Keaton on set 'seemed immured in his past […] the only time he came alive was when he described what happened when they were making films in the old days […] I remember him saying that they started with a beginning and an end and improvised the rest as they went along'.[39] Schneider reiterates this tendency of Keaton's to discuss how they made films in the old studios, 'with no script, starting with an idea about a character in trouble, a series of improvisations and gags to get him out of trouble, finis'.[40] Beckett would have been aware of this tendency before commencing production: Keaton's autobiography, which Beckett read after their first meeting,[41] recounts the issue at length.[42] When he started out in films in 1917, his mentor, 'Fatty' Arbuckle, taught him to improvise extensively. After Joseph Schenck put Keaton in charge

[39] Kevin Brownlow, interview with Beckett.
[40] Schneider, 'On Directing *Film*', 36.
[41] Knowlson, *Damned to Fame,* 523.
[42] Buster Keaton and Charles Samuels, *My Wonderful World of Slapstick* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1960), 33.

of his own studio in 1920, this working method became second-nature, and until 1929, Keaton 'exerted total artistic control over his gags, which depended on improvising and adapting physical routines to the necessity of the moment'.[43] Schenck's studio did not survive the transition to sound. Keaton signed up with MGM, failing to anticipate their insistence on their own scripts. In charge of his own productions, Keaton was one of Hollywood's greatest actor-directors, but under MGM, he became an expendable sidekick to the vulgar fast-talking Jimmy Durante, and was eventually reduced to playing supporting roles. In one notable film during this period, a possible influence on *Waiting for Godot*, Keaton played the role of Goulard in Richard Oswald's *The Loveable Cheat* (1948), an adaptation of Balzac's 1848 play *Mercadet Le Faiseur.* In a scene towards the end, the main characters, together with Goulard, wait for a character called Godeau to arrive. Keaton remarks, 'gentlemen, I give you my word, I do not expect Godeau today', to which another character remarks, 'Then it'll be tomorrow'.

The deep and complex sense of nostalgia in Beckett's film is a consequence of seeing Keaton return to silent film, but as an old man no longer capable of performing his virtuoso stunts. The occurrence of aging actors, as Cavell puts it, declares the fact that films depend upon the appearance in them of living men and women defined by their 'self-identity through repeated incarnations' in other, earlier films. Cavell does not mention Beckett, but his observation that Keaton's appearance in Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard* (1950), as an instance of how 'the particular human beings whose characteristics helped to fix the media of movies are now old or gone', bears relevance to a discussion of *Film*. *Sunset Boulevard* is a film about returning, making a comeback, but it is more generally about the effect of aging, primarily of the faded silent screen star Norma Desmond, played by Gloria Swanson, but also of Keaton and Eric Von Stroheim, who plays her butler and former husband and director. Cavell mentions the scene in which Norma Desmond/Gloria Swanson watches an earlier incarnation of herself in her young films: 'the juxtaposition of the phases of her appearance cuts the knowledge into us, of the movie's aging and ours, with every frame'.[44] Part of the effect of the scene depends on the audience remembering the film's stars – especially Keaton and Stroheim – when they were young. The film she watches, *Queen Kelly* (1929), starring Swanson and directed by Von Stroheim, heightens and extends the documentary-like double aspect of actor-character which the film foregrounds, in ways similar to Keaton's browsing of photographs

[43] Knopf, *The Theater and Cinema of Buster Keaton*, 37.
[44] Cavell, *World Viewed*, 74.

of himself at different ages, from infancy to the present, towards the end of *Film*. The photographs represent O, as Beckett put it, '*in percipi*… we actually see him being observed'.[45] Keaton the camera eye watches himself watching himself, he is both present and not present at something happening – O looking at photos of himself – and also at something that has happened, or what the photos reproduce. The person in the photographs is frozen out of time, looked upon by the mortal, aged remains of that same person. By suggesting an affective relation to the photos – Keaton's hand trembles as he holds the fifth and sixth, and the rocking chair serves to 'emotionalize inspection' (334) – Beckett allegorizes Keaton's feeling for his own past, the pathos of his own mortality.

Beckett's *Film* returned Keaton to his home turf, the pre-talkies, but at the same time recreated the conditions of his decline. Except for the opening street sequence, cancelled due to the exigencies and errors of production, the shooting closely followed the script, despite Keaton's insistence upon his right to improvise: 'Keaton suggested some special business with his walk, or perhaps sharpening his pencil till it got smaller and smaller. I said we didn't normally pad Beckett's material.'[46] In light of these contradictions, O's walk acquires symbolic value: 'foundered precipitancy' also describes the catastrophic split in Keaton's life on screen, his 'rapid onward movement' in silent film cut short by the 'headlong descent' into talkies. In Beckett's letter to Eisenstein, he emphasizes a primary interest in 'the scenario and editing end of the subject', before going on to state that 'the script is function of its means of realisation'.[47] The script of *Film*, as Steven Connor points out, 'speaks in advance of elements of the performance as though they had already been performed'.[48] This degree of pre-determination is contrary in the extreme to a silent Keaton film. Even despite the imprecisions in the script, such as the technical naivety of the separate perceptions, or the impossibility of conveying, through E's gaze, how O hastens 'blindly' (331), Keaton found little space in which to exercise his physical talents. The authoritarian directions were an 'anguish of perceivedness' (323), for Keaton the performer as well as for O. This tension between Keaton as silent performer and Beckett's 'acute intentness' (329), despite Schneider's insistence that he did not want it to be a 'Keaton film',[49] contributes to the film's rich complexity of reference to silent film.

[45] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 29 June 1964, Maurice Harmon, *No Author Better Served: The Correspondence of Samuel Beckett and Alan Schneider* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 159.

[46] Schneider, 'On Directing *Film*', 36.

[47] Beckett to Eisenstein, 3 February 1936, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett,* vol. 1, 317.

[48] Steven Connor, *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory, Text* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 187.

[49] Schneider, 'On Directing *Film*', 36.

Keaton did in fact improvise on one sequence, the film's main sight gag, although the scene was mistimed in the cutting room. Beckett's script did not indicate the manner in which O turns out the cat and the dog while they scamper back into the room. The direction in the script is merely: 'he turns towards dog and cat still staring at him. He puts them out of the room' (327). Beckett allowed Keaton to follow through, and he constructed a signature Keaton gag, partially remembered from a similar scene in *Our Hospitality* (1923), where a small boy re-enters the room with Keaton's back turned, after he has been carried out. Beckett expressed disappointment with this sequence in its final form: 'I don't feel the animal gag at all funny, I find it too long.'[50] Robert Knopf gives a compelling explanation of why the gag disappoints:

> The gag failed because of Schneider's direction rather than Keaton's performance […] In film, the take depends upon the camera's staying on the performer for at least a beat before cutting to another shot; otherwise the punch line to the gag – the performer's reaction – disappears. Schneider literally cut the gag out from under Keaton by cutting on the take instead of a moment after it, limiting the shot to a split-second view of O's back. Beckett failed to detect the problem with the sequence when he said it was too long. On the contrary, the sequence *seems* too long because it is about three seconds too short.[51]

A Keaton gag such as this one would have relied, in a film made by Keaton Studios, on the reaction of his face. The injunction that he hide his face lends further significance to the idea of the reluctant Keaton persona tormented by the restless intent of the camera. As Beckett put it, 'we were depriving him of his trump card'.[52] Keaton kept making remarks on set about his face, the means which enabled the audience to identify with his plight, 'being his livelihood all these years'.[53] In his vaudeville years, his father taught him not to smile early in his career,[54] and from there began a lifetime of keeping a poker face. Robert Benayoun remarks that his most iconic feature is 'his look […] seen in full face';[55] the tension between his quick-witted limbs and inward-turned stone gaze is a crucial aspect of the Keaton persona. Keaton's look is translated into 'that look' (329) in the final sequence, which Beckett described

[50] Gontarski, *Intent of Undoing*, 108.
[51] Knopf, *The Theater and Cinema of Buster Keaton*, 145–146.
[52] Kevin Brownlow, interview with Beckett.
[53] Schneider, 'On Directing *Film*', 33.
[54] Knopf, *The Theater and Cinema of Buster Keaton*, 21.
[55] Robert Benayoun, *The Look of Buster Keaton,* trans. Randall Conrad (London: Pavillion Books, 1984), 17.

to Kevin Brownlow: ' "And when you saw that face at the end – oh!" He smiled. "At last".'[56]

The effect echoes the pay-off at the end of *Queen Christina* (1933) in the extended close-up of Garbo's iconic face. Stumbling through the streets of New York, refusing to have his face photographed, O resembles the reclusive Garbo in her later years, the ultimate prize for celebrity stalkers, famously always hiding her face.[57] One stalker photographer did in fact chase Garbo around New York for twenty years, trying to take an image of her face. Garbo, in flight from an 'agony of perceivedness', always succeeded in preventing an image of her aged face from being made public. But Keaton, as distinct from O, remained anxious throughout the production at the withholding of his trademark look, particularly as it also restricted his movement. 'O is perceived by E from behind and at an angle not exceeding 45 degrees' (323): this convention, as Jonathan Bignell notes, is 'alien to the syntax of narrative cinema'.[58] O's flight from 'perceivedness' is also a flight, as Ruth Perlumutter observes, from 'the system of looks and responses on which cinema is based: the nature of looking and being looked at'.[59] The shot-reverse-shot system is a convention whereby the eyelines of characters engaged in dialogue are matched along an unseen 180 degree axis; the camera never crosses this axis as it switches from one point of view to the other, from action to reaction shots. By extension, the angle at which the spectator sees an object on screen matches the angle from which the character observes it, generating a structure which implicates both perceiver and perceived. In the sequence with the elderly couple and the old lady, Beckett refuses the reverse shot, or rather delays it until the end. Each exhibits the same facial reaction, mouth open, eyes wide in horror at being watched, a preface to the climactic Keaton face.

The technique was established in films by D.W. Griffith, to whom Beckett alludes when Murphy sees Ticklepenny 'as though on the silent screen by Griffith in midshot soft-focus'.[60] Beckett invokes pre-institutional films by disavowing the system of shot-reverse-shot, and then summoning the chase films of incipient narrative cinema. Linda Ben-Zvi's comparison with

[56] Beckett, interview with Kevin Brownlow.

[57] James Karen, who worked on *Film*, recalls: 'I would follow her around at the antique shows, I never spoke to her, she never spoke to me […] she never spoke to anyone as far as I could see. I never heard her voice.' Interview in *Garbo* (TCM, 2005).

[58] Bignell, *Beckett on Screen*, 194.

[59] Perlmutter, 'Beckett's *Film* and Beckett and Film', 83–94; 86.

[60] Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (London: John Calder, [1938] 1993), 108.

'early Hollywood Keystone chase comedies built on an identification with either pursuer or perceived' falls short of Beckett's reference to much earlier chase films.[61] The film constructs a dialectic in which pre-institutional film, represented by O, where the spectator is externalized and refused perceptual identification, is pitched against the technique of spectator-subject identification, incipient in those Keystone comedies, and embodied in the spectator figure of E.

Primitive chase films represent the first manifestations of narrative continuity, or the idea that 'a single continuity can be constructed by cutting and joining together two separate pieces of filmed action'.[62] In James Williamson's *Stop Thief!* (1901), and the Biograph films *The Maniac Chase* and *Personal* (1904), the main characters are chased by a group from one locale to the next. The shot is held 'until first the pursued and then the pursuers exit the frame', and the 'next shot begins the movement through the frame over again'.[63] Although the disruption in the edit is 'smoothed over by the continuity of the character's movement', there is often, in the delay between one sequence and the next, a moment where the frame remains uninhabited. Beckett writes this delay into his script. In the moment when E transfers his gaze from O, to the old woman on the stairs, and then back to 'where O last registered', O is 'no longer there' (326). The empty frame harks back to pre-institutional chase films, but the spectator is not externalized; he or she perceptually inhabits the framing of E's focal point. E as camera eye cannot show an object without at the same time revealing his own physical position, angle and distance from the object, as an aspect of what is shown. In this respect, the externality of the chase film is measured against the embodiment relations available after the development of spectator-subject identification.

The empty frame harks back to pre-institutional chase films; although the spectator is not externalized, he or she perceptually inhabits every frame of E's introceptive focal point. The film image contains both seen object and an observer who inhabits a specific point in space and time, a distillation of institutional cinema, once the system of shot-reverse-shot, becomes a convention:

> The physiognomy of every object in a film picture is a composite of two physiognomies – one is that of the object, its very own, which is quite independent

[61] Ben-Zvi, 'Media Plays', 25.

[62] Don Fairservice, *Film Editing: History, Theory, Practice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 34.

[63] Tom Gunning, 'Non-Continuity, Continuity, Discontinuity: A Theory of Genres in Early Films', *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (London: BFI, 1990), 91.

> of the spectator – and another physiognomy, determined by the viewpoint of the spectator and the perspective of the picture. In the shot, the two merge into so close a unity that only a very practised eye is capable of distinguishing these two components in the picture itself.[64]

As Vivian Sobchack argues, film 'visibly duplicates the act of viewing from within, that is, the introceptive and intrasubjective side of vision […] film's vision appears as vision lived through intentionally, introceptively, visually, as "mine" '.[65] The frame functions simultaneously as 'reflective vision' and 'deliberative intentionality'; it is an 'organ of perception' and bears the film's 'orientational point'.[66] By duplicating the structure of human vision, whose agency is an aspect of bodily perception, 'the field within which perceptive powers are localized',[67] cinematic vision appears to duplicate bodily agency, 'just as our whole being as embodied informs what we see and makes us present to the visible even as the visible appears as present to us'.[68] This generates a correlational structure of intentional consciousness and mechanical activity: film is to cinematic technology as human perception and its expression is to human physiology. In both cases, 'the irreducible structure of perception (perceiving act/perceiving object) is dependent upon and enabled by the conduct and behaviour of an instrumentality that synoptically accomplishes and expresses in the world a perceptive and perceptible intention, that is, a lived-body'.[69] The camera enables the perceptive act while the spectator incorporates the camera as an extension of his or her body. This analogue between human and mechanical perception is also an 'embodiment relation';[70] the camera's vision simulates embodiment, it is a bodily style of being-in-the-world.

The contradictions between externalized pre-institutional film and the subjective, embodied camera eye provide an extended critique of the phenomenology of filmic perception. The divided perceptual structure splits Keaton in two. Intolerably aware that he plays for a mechanical contrivance, O does not want his face reproduced, a position contrary to the livelihood of the Keaton persona. This estrangement between actor and role, and the

[64] Bela Balazs, *Theory of the Film*, trans. Edith Bone (London: Dennis Dobson, 1952), 142.
[65] Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 138.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'The Philosopher and His Shadow', quoted in Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*, 77.
[68] Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*, 133.
[69] Ibid., 166.
[70] Ibid., 141.

depersonalization of Keaton in the process, contributes to the film's idea of the split-self. The 45 degree convention also gives O immunity from his own reflection, though the final sequence presents E and O as mirror images, O, with a patch over his right eye, E, with a patch over his left, an embodiment of Benjamin's observation that 'the feeling of strangeness that overcomes the actor before the camera is the same kind as the estrangement before one's own image in the mirror'.[71] *Film* foregrounds the anguish of the conversion from bodily presence into flickering image, thematizing the distinctions between the character as 'agent of a series of narrative predicates', the person as 'the living body of a human being who […] represents the character', and the image as 'the person, the body, in its conversion into the luminous sense of its film presence'.[72] The disjunction between physical identity and consciousness, and between phenomenological experience and narratorial detachment is played out in the dissolution of the Keaton persona. For Keaton, as his body overtakes him, leaving his intentional consciousness trailing behind, ' "myself" never coincides with my image'.[73] Keaton is not only not-I, but not-him.

The fictional narrative in *Film* also doubles up, in my account, as a pseudo-documentary account of the aged Keaton contemplating his own distant and irretrievable past. The documentary aspect of *Film*, in this respect, belongs to the wider influence of documentary narratives on the modernist cinema of the period. The documentaries of Jean Rouch and the cinéma vérité movement, particularly the technique of reassembling visual segments of real events into a fictional narrative, powerfully influenced Jean-Luc Godard. *Masculine-Feminine* (1966) and *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (1966) often resemble cinéma vérité documentaries in their organization of scenes and characters taken directly from reality with voiceover and narrative techniques. Godard spoke of his practice in relation to Rouch and his great predecessor, one of the pioneers of cinéma vérité, Robert Flaherty: 'They take the characters from reality and make a fictional story with them. It is somewhat like what I do, but just in the opposite way: I took fictional characters, and I made a story with them that in a way looked like a documentary'.[74] According to this definition, Beckett's *Film,* which takes a character 'from reality', overlaps with the documentary style of Flaherty and Rouch. Beckett had admired the films of Flaherty in the thirties. In 1934, he

[71] Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in ed. Hannah Arendt and trans. Harry Zohn, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (London: Fontana, 1968), 216.
[72] Stephen Heath, *Questions of Cinema* (London: Macmillan, 1981), 183.
[73] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Cape, 1982), 12.
[74] Quoted in Kovács, *Screening Modernism*, 170.

saw *Man of Aran*, Flaherty's experimental documentary shot in the Aran Islands, to the west of Galway Bay, writing to Nuala Costello that he was 'irretrievably glued to the seat'. What Beckett discovered in Flaherty was a combination of nature documentary and fictional technique, the 'sea, rocks, air and granite gobs very fine' together with the 'trucs of montage and photography', the 'au ralenti' or slow motion, and the boy, played by Mickleen Dillane, 'pure Harold Lloyd'. Beckett felt, however, that there was 'a sensationalisation of Aran' in Flaherty, as in John Millington Synge, whose life on Aran is reflected, for instance, in his 1904 play *Riders of the Sea*.[75]

Given his interest in Flaherty – elsewhere, he enquires about Flaherty's *Elephant Boy* (1937), and mentions being at school with Flaherty's assistant, James Davidson[76] – it is very likely that he would also have seen *Nanook of the North* (1922). *Close Up* described Flaherty's film, about an Inuk man and his life with his family in the Canadian arctic, as 'one of the most inspiring the most important experimental films', placing it alongside highly regarded narrative fiction by Ernst Lubitsch and Erich Von Stroheim.[77] *Nanook of the North* was made during a period which did not overtly distinguish documentary and fiction techniques; the lead character, Nanook Allakariallak, appears as himself, or plays himself, but the story, in which he builds an igloo, searches for food, hunts a walrus, and visits a trading post was a fictional invention. As with Keaton in *Film, Nanook* is a document about the real relation between the lead actor, who is playing a version of himself, and the camera which observes him. In the first shot of Nanook, as William Rothman notes, 'he is doing nothing, that is, apart from being viewed, allowing himself to be viewed by the camera'.[78] The frontal framing, and the closeness of the camera to Nanook, who cannot but be aware of its presence, immediately posits a relation between the actor/character and the camera eye. As with O in *Film*, the implied relationship between subject and camera reverses the convention in a fiction film whereby the actor, in order convincingly to portray the fictional character, must not acknowledge the presence of the camera. In a scene in *Nanook,* after he slices the throat of a walrus and eats its raw flesh, Nanook looks up at the camera in a manner which suggests its intrusive

[75] Beckett to Nuala Costello, 10 May 1934, The *Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 1, 207.
[76] Beckett to Thomas McGreevy, 7 March 1937, ibid., 461.
[77] Wilbur Needham, 'The Future of American Cinema', *Close Up*, 2.4 (April 1928), 47.
[78] William Rothman, 'The Filmmaker as Hunter: Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North*', in eds Barry Keith Grant and Jeannette Sloniowski, *Documenting the Documentary: Close Readings of Documentary Film and Video* (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1998), 6.

threat, and the limits of how far he is willing to be observed. As when he sharpens his knife, then looks at the camera and grins as he shows his blade, the implication, here and elsewhere, of the relation between the camera as the observing consciousness of the director and the subject, bears comparison with Keaton/O's heightened awareness of the camera, and his refusal, unlike Nanook, to give permission to be filmed.

Aspects of documentary realism extend also to the location of the opening street scene in *Film*. This opening scene was cut, at Beckett's suggestion, after a problem with the camera created a 'strobe effect', making the scene, as Schneider remarked, 'impossible to watch';[79] the scene was replaced with the close-up of Keaton's eye dissolving on the wall. This was the film's only exterior scene, and was thought lost until the archivist and filmmaker Ross Lipman found the footage in Barney Rosset's cupboard in his apartment in New York. Lipman was able to restore the footage and the lost scene is a highlight both of his recent documentary, *NotFilm* (2015), about the making of *Film*, and the accompanying restored print of *Film.* The scene was crucial to Beckett's conception and writing of *Film*: as he indicates in a letter to Rosset, it constitutes the first part of the film and is roughly ten minutes (in contrast to the second part, 'the stairs of a house', of five minutes and the third, in a 'small room', of fifteen minutes).[80] In a pre-production meeting, Beckett spoke with determination about the relation of the street scene to the rest of the film:

> I want to fortify the analogy between the inspection of the street and the inspection of the room in the complete series by having the elements involved inspected in the same order. If it's 1, 3, 5, 2, 7, 6, we give numbers to the elements in the room; we give numbers to the couples in the street, and have them inspected in exactly the same order. By E in the street and by O in the room […] It's a kind of integrity, formal integrity.[81]

In pre-production, Beckett was mainly preoccupied with achieving this 'formal integrity', and was concerned with finding an 'absolute street, absolute exterior, absolute transition, and absolute interior. Abstract almost'. He speaks of the 'considerable degree of nonrealism in the street by the way we're treating it'. But what is striking about the newly restored scene is how it clearly indicates the reality of film's setting in New York. The scene contains real buildings, a

[79] Schneider, 'On Directing Film', 77.

[80] Beckett to Barney Rosset, 13 April 1963, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, vol. 3: 1957–1965*, eds George Craig, Martha Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 539.

[81] Gontarski, *Intent of Undoing,* 191.

real street, advertisements for 'Freezing and Cold Storage' and office space in the arches of Brooklyn Bridge. This realist element undoes Beckett's original intention to find an absolute, or abstract, street by clearly indicating the film's location. Although Schneider spent several days scouting for locations in New York, it was Beckett himself who found the street, near Fulton Street fish market, 'in the shadow of Brooklyn Bridge'.[82] As Richard Seaver writes, 'One day in lower Manhattan, Beckett's eyes brightened as we came in sight of a dilapidated old wall hard by the Brooklyn Bridge. He nodded and indicated that this is where the opening sequence should be shot, no question. The wall, part of a building slated for demolition, was pure Beckett: sagging, uneven, its cement flaking and crumbling.'[83]

In my view, Beckett may have recalled a location in a docufiction he saw, Lionel Rogosin's *On the Bowery* (1956), a film also shot near the Brooklyn Bridge in New York. Beckett greatly admired Rogosin, having previously seen *Come Back Africa* (1959), an anti-apartheid documentary about the plight of a Zulu family driven from their village by famine, writing to Aidan Higgins in 1960: 'Saw a good film on your dear Union "Come back Africa." Certainly hasn't been shown with you. Shot more or less clandestinely. Wonderful end.'[84] After seeing *On the Bowery*, he wrote: 'saw a superb film – On the Bowery ("Come Back Africa" man with Russian name), shall go again this evening if I can keep out of pubs'[85] and again, a letter to Schneider: 'Have seen nothing but Rogosin's marvellous ON THE BOWERY, went two nights running and want to go again'.[86] After making *On The Bowery,* a docufiction about alcoholics on Manhattan's skid row, Rogosin became one of the founders of the New American Cinema movement, a group of filmmakers including Morris Engels and Sidney Meyers – the editor of Beckett's *Film* – which employed a politicized non-narrative docufiction style directly inspired by Robert Flaherty and Italian neo-realism, and which focussed on the downtrodden and the underclass. The cinematographer for *On the Bowery,* Richard Bagley, also shot *The Quiet One* (1948), another early example of American cinema verité docufiction, which told the story of the rehabilitation of a ten-year-old African-American boy in Harlem. The film

[82] Alan Schneider, *Entrances: An American Director's Journey* (New York: Viking, 1986), 358.
[83] Richard Seaver, *The Tender Hour of Twilight: Paris in the '50s, New York in the '60s: A Memoir of Publishing's Golden Age*, ed. Jeannette Seaver (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012), 320.
[84] Beckett to Robert Pinget, 21 December 1959, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett,* vol. 3, 297.
[85] Beckett to Barbara Bray, 17 November 1960, ibid., 374.
[86] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 9 December 1960, Harmon, *No Author Better Served,* 77.

was directed by Sidney Meyers; Beckett grew close to Meyers during the making of *Film* – he told Barbara Bray that he was 'a great bloke'[87] – and remained his friend and correspondent for years to come.

Although Rogosin's *On The Bowery* won the Grand Prize for Documentary at the 1956 Venice Film Festival, the British Award for Best Documentary and was nominated for an Oscar in the Documentary category, mainstream film critics did not appreciate the film's rejection of Hollywood production values, its use of unprofessional actors, lack of narrative arc, and gritty cinematography of squalor and poverty. But the film found its ideal audience in Beckett, who saw it at least twice in one week. It tells the story of Ray Salyer, a railroad worker, and Gorman Hendricks, both of whom were real characters who had drifted into the impoverished conditions of the Bowery, an area in Manhattan known for its homelessness and alcoholism. As Ray is robbed and descends into poverty and drink, he encounters various Beckettian characters, all lost to alcoholism; these were real characters Rogosin had met after submerging himself in Bowery life for several months. Shooting with the barest rudiments of script, Rogosin devised a method of improvised dialogue with the Bowery characters which combined staged scenes with a cinéma vérité style, filming action on the streets and bars of the Bowery as they happened in real time and dissolving distinctions, as in Flaherty, between documentary and fiction. The opening shot resembles the restored scene of *Film*: a shot of a New York street, in the shadow of a bridge, shows us a range of characters, many of whom look directly at the camera, acknowledging its presence, before introducing the film's protagonist. In Beckett, the 'cab' driven by a 'cantering nag' suggests a similar figure in Rogosin's film. As well as locating the action in New York, the abandoned street scene in *Film* serves to emphasize O's isolation from others around him; it establishes a street scene of 'moderate animation' (324), with O 'hastening blindly along sidewalk' and 'in opposite direction to all the others' (324); O's anxiety of perception is in marked contrast to the series of couples who walk towards the camera, 'all contentedly in percipere and percipi' (324). O's alienation from the street scene, in light of the comparison with *On the Bowery*, suggests an abstraction of one of Rogosin's lost alcoholics.

One final documentary effect in *Film* contributed to its undoing: the sense in which the camera as an observing eye replicated Beckett's own troubled

[87] Beckett to Avigdor Arikha and Anne Atik, 31 July 1964, The *Letters of Samuel Beckett,* vol. 3, 614. Meyers also co-wrote and directed *The Savage Eye* (1959), a docufiction about the life of a divorced woman in an unnamed US city, and was the script consultant for Joseph Strick's film adaptation of James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

eyesight. As James Knowlson comments in Ross Lipman's *NotFilm* (2015), during the making of *Film,* Beckett's vision was blurred and clouded due to cataracts (a successful operation in 1971 helped restore his eyesight).[88] In this respect, the optical filter, used in *Film* to represent the 'slower and softer' vision of O as distinct from the sharper focus of E, mimicked Beckett's own myopia. The technical problem as to how to present two mutually exclusive perceptions was never adequately resolved; it is the main reason why 'the work never quite coalesces'.[89] Although Beckett's conception of two simultaneous perceptions was fairly unprecedented in cinema, with the exception of *Lady in the Lake* (1946), filmed in the first person throughout, the gauze filter used to distinguish O's perception from E's left an ill-defined image which Beckett said 'worked at a certain distance but for close-ups it was no good'.[90] For Beckett, 'the problem of the double vision' is 'not really solved';[91] Schneider agreed that 'the two vision thing never worked'.[92] Despite his plea for 'technical help' (323), it seems likely that Beckett's concern to reproduce the effect of blurred, myopic vision overlooked other technical options offered by his crew. In preproduction discussions, Beckett 'explained the necessary camera positions and angles to all concerned (nor did he budge from his fundamental position in the face of some highly sophisticated arguments about the new-found flexibility and mobility of the film medium) and tried to explain the exact difference of intensity he wanted in the separate visions of O and E'.[93] Despite working closely on the E-O distinction with Boris Kaufman, who shot Jean Vigo's *L'Atalante* (1934) and *Zéro de Conduite* (1933), as well as *Twelve Angry Men* (1957), *Splendor in the Grass* (1961) and *On the Waterfront* (1955) – Beckett called him 'impressive' and a 'great cameraman'[94] – the myopic effect of the gauze filter was misjudged: a better solution would have been to present O's perception as a negative print.

Film received considerable attention and won awards on the festival circuit during 1965 and 1966, including the New York Film Festival award, the Diploma di Merito at the Venice Film Festival and 'film of the year' at the London Film Festival. But the attention and accolades *Film* received were due in large part to the recent revival of interest in Keaton's silent comedies. As Schneider notes, there was initially little interest from festival programmers, even with Beckett's

[88] Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, 579.
[89] Gontarski, *Intent of Undoing,* 110.
[90] Kevin Brownlow, interview with Beckett.
[91] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 29 September 1964, Harmon, *No Author Better Served,* 166.
[92] Schneider, *Entrances,* 362.
[93] Schneider, 'On Directing Film', 68, 71.
[94] The *Letters of Samuel Beckett,* vol. 3, 609, 611.

name attached, until Amos Vogel at the New York Film Festival opted 'to show it as part of a Keaton revival series'.[95] *Film* was screened in New York in a programme called 'Beckett and Buster', alongside his 1925 film *Seven Chances* and one of his final films, *The Railrodder* (1965). In Richard Roud's account, 'the shorter films got mixed reactions, but *Seven Chances* was a hit'.[96] According to Schneider, the 'audience got up on their hind legs and booed lustily'.[97] But Keaton received a standing ovation at the 1965 Venice Film Festival European premiere. As Jonathan Bignell notes, 'this reaction was not primarily because of his work in *Film*. It was the result of European intellectuals' recent revaluation of his silent comedy films of the 1920s.'[98] *Film* was made during a great revival of interest in Keaton's silent comedies. Henri Langlois had programmed a season of Keaton films at the Cinémathèque Française in 1962 to popular and critical acclaim. The opening night on the Rue d'Ulm Theater was attended by legendary silent filmmakers such as Abel Gance, and 'the line went all the way up the hill. There were so many people inside that Keaton was almost crushed by the crowd'.[99]

Keaton's films were widely discussed in the early 1960s in the pages of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, the key journal of the nouvelle vague, and in journals such as *Positif, Présence du Cinéma, Gazette du Cinéma, Le Figaro littéraire* and *L'Express*. As Schneider notes, Fellini, Godard, Antonioni and Visconti were all in attendance at the 1966 Venice Film Festival; Schneider was excited to find himself in the company of modernist film directors, although the reaction at New York shattered his filmmaking ambitions: 'I thought of Godard and Antonioni and a few others at Cannes, wept and ran.'[100] One of the key French modernist filmmakers, Alain Resnais, and Delphine Seyrig – the star of *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*, directed by Resnais and written by Alain Robbe-Grillet – visited the set of *Film* on July 20.[101] Beckett admired Resnais – 'I have met Resnais, the most gifted of the lot probably' – and thought '*Nuit et Brouillard* was very fine'.[102] He had previously discussed a film adaptation of *All That Fall* with Resnais: 'Talk also of a film [with Resnais] of the French All That Fall. I have not yet given the green light for this, but so admire Resnais that I probably shall.'[103] Beckett also

[95] Schneider, *Entrances*, 362.
[96] Richard Roud, *Passion for Film: Henri Langlois and the Cinémathèque Française* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1983), 131.
[97] Schneider, *Entrances*, 363.
[98] Bignell, *Beckett on Screen*, 117.
[99] Roud, *Passion for Film*, 97.
[100] Schneider, *Entrances,* 363.
[101] Ibid., 358.
[102] Beckett to John Manning, 15 October 1959, The *Letters of Samuel Beckett,* vol. 3, 246.
[103] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 27 April 1958, Harmon, *No Author Better Served*, 45.

knew and respected Robbe-Grillet – he read *La Jalousie* in 1959 and thought it 'very important and remarkable'[104] – and was 'Pleased to hear that Robbe-Grillet liked [*Film*]',[105] mentioning his response again in another letter: 'Robbe-Grillet saw *Film* in Paris and liked it.'[106]

Beckett watched *L'Année dernière à Marienbad,* directed by Alain Resnais and written by Alain Robbe-Grillet, on its release in 1962. In a brief record of a discussion of *Marienbad* with his friend, the critic Lawrence Harvey, Beckett remarks on the use of form against plot and character: 'Beckett feels that Robbe-Grillet has a doctrine ie he has a form [so] that his anti-plot, his anticharacter and so on quickly becomes a convention. He felt that the love story in this film was traditional and banal. It was merely expressed differently.'[107] In a letter to Beckett, Schneider mentions an article by Peter Brook about *Happy Days* and *Marienbad,* and tells him he will send him a copy: 'Did you ever read the article Peter Brook wrote on HAPPY DAYS and MARIENBAD in a recent issue of ENCORE? If not, I'll get an extra copy and send it on.'[108] In the article, Brook claims that 'though the film does not succeed in itself, a radical experiment has been made and its interest to me is its relation to the theatre.'[109]

L'Année dernière à Marienbad is generally considered to be one of the key modernist films of the period, the first in a series of important works to assert a continuity with the silent films of Abel Gance, Marcel L'Herbier, Jean Cocteau, Germaine Dulac and Jean Epstein. On its release, Eric Rohmer called Resnais 'the first modern auteur of the cinema', and critics agreed that *Marienbad* marked cinema's return to the modernist project.[110] Like *Play*, which Beckett wrote soon after *Marienbad*'s release,[111] it combines a traditional and banal story of a bourgeois love triangle with medium-specific formal innovation. Three figures converge in a grand palace inhabited by nameless phantoms. A man tries to convince a woman, played by Delphine Seyrig, of their affair last year at Marienbad. The woman, for reasons unknown, refuses his story and denies ever having met him. The man continues to persuade her while her husband

[104] Beckett to Barbara Bray, 26 March 1959, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett,* vol. 3, 222.
[105] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 3 March 1965, Harmon, *No Author Better Served,* 186.
[106] Harmon, *No Author Better Served,* 181.
[107] Knowlson James and Elizabeth Knowlson, eds, *Beckett Remembering, Remembering Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), 135.
[108] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 27 August 1962, Harmon, *No Author Better Served*, 128.
[109] Peter Brook, 'Happy Days and Marienbad', *Encore*, 9 (January–February 1962), 34–38; 38.
[110] Quoted in András Bálint Kovács, *Screening Modernism: European Art Cinema 1950–1980* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 303.
[111] *Spiel* opened at the Ulmer Theater, Ulm-Donau, 14 June 1963, directed by Deryk Mendel, who also played the two mimes. Act Without Words I and II, designed by Michel Raffaelli. Nancy Illig (f.1 First Woman), Sigrid Pfeiffer (f.2 Second Woman), Gerhard Winter (m. Man).

impassively looks on. The film, as Resnais puts it, is 'perhaps about a woman who has had an affair and cannot decide between her husband and her lover',[112] but this is only one possible scenario in a series of shape-shifting hypotheses, false memories and future conditionals, staged as possibly real or possibly imaginary encounters. What we see could represent the man's fantasy, or the husband's, or the woman's resistance to both. As James Monaco observes, any given shot 'can be read as a present or past tense, as a conditional, a subjunctive, or as pure fantasy'.[113] Its method of construction shows forth the influence of the modernist novel, from Joyce and Beckett, Proust and Robbe-Grillet himself. Events are re-staged and modified according to who narrates them. Radically discontinuous editing style allows settings and tenses to shift and start according to the workings of three separate interior monologues. Godard calls Resnais second only to Eisenstein as an editor; Eisenstein himself learned to edit partly from reading *Ulysses,* which he regarded as the 'Bible of Cinema'.

While only loosely affiliated, Beckett and Resnais share certain common influences. Both articulate an explicit desire, prevalent enough also amongst other directors as to constitute a tendency, to revive contemporary filmmaking by harking back to the silent cinema. Resnais remarked that he 'wanted to renew a certain style of the silent cinema',[114] just as Beckett wanted to create a 'backwater for the two dimensional silent film': 'the industrial film will become so completely naturalistic, in stereoscopic colour & gramophonic sound, that a backwater may be created for the two-dimensional silent film that had barely emerged from its rudiments when it was swamped. Then there would be two separate things and no question of a fight between them, or rather of a rout.' During pre-production on *Marienbad*, Resnais asked Eastman Kodak to provide old-fashioned filmstock that would create the halo-effect of silent film.[115] He showed Bernard Evein, the costume designer, photos of Marcel Herbier's *L'Inhumaine* (1924) and *L'Argent* (1928):[116] the grand scale of the production and costume design in *Marienbad* directly alludes to the style of production in L'Herbier's films. Resnais, like the rest of the nouvelle vague, discovered the silent film tradition at Henri Langlois' Cinémathèque Française. For Resnais, Langlois was 'my idol. He made me discover films I couldn't see elsewhere. Not just Feuillade, but Buñuel, Fritz Lang, the Russian classics, Greed, Intolerance.'

[112] Quoted in Emma Wilson, *Alain Resnais* (Manchester: Manchester University, 2006), 81.
[113] Monaco, *Alain Resnais*, 56.
[114] Ibid., 55.
[115] Quoted in Roy Armes, *The Cinema of Alain Resnais* (London: Zwemmer, 1968), 105.
[116] Jean-Louis Leutrat, *Last Year At Marienbad*, trans. Paul Hammond (London: BFI Publishing, 2000), 54.

Speaking of Louis Feuillade, Resnais remarked, 'Like thousands of other people, I owe my discovery of Feuillade to Langlois, who can never be thanked enough.'[117] The aspect shifts between live and recorded performance, the idea of recurrence, repetition and regeneration in Feuillade's film serials, *Fantomas* (1913) and *Les Vampires* (1915) – films 'admired in the 1920s by the Surrealists: Louis Aragon, Andre Breton, and Luis Buñuel'[118] – are clearly echoed in *Marienbad*, as is the peculiar mixture of realism and the fantastic, a style which Resnais attributes to the 'Feuillade school'.[119] The ghost-like presence of silent film is a principal feature of *Marienbad*'s second wave modernism, as is the film's preoccupation with the presence of the camera as a narrating consciousness and an embodied perspective. These formal and stylistic concerns, which Beckett also shared, were developed in collaboration with the writers of the nouveau roman.

Two of the movement's main exponents, Robbe-Grillet and Marguerite Duras, were also key figures in the revival of film modernism: Duras wrote *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959), also directed by Resnais, and regarded as the inaugural film in this new tendency in French cinema. Beckett has been compared with the nouveau roman – Robbe-Grillet himself claimed Beckett for the movement[120] – but he has not been placed in the context of the cinema of the period, and its intersections with the new literary style. As Roland Barthes observes, the handling of space in Robbe-Grillet's *Les Gommes* (1953) owes a debt to the 'revolution cinema brought about in the domain of visual reflexes',[121] particularly in the restrictions of narrative perspective to optical surfaces. Beckett expressed an interest in *Les Gommes* on its publication – 'When is *Les Gommes* due out?'[122] – and commented in the same letter that he found an article by Robbe-Grillet, titled 'Samuel Beckett, Auteur Dramatique': 'excellent, by far the best I have read'.[123] Beckett also read Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalousie* (1958) and called it 'very imp[o]rtant and remarkable'.[124] In *La Jalousie,* an unnamed narrator watches his wife with her presumed lover, noting in obsessive detail, as if recorded by a camera, what he sees and what he imagines seeing; scenes are modified and played again like repeated takes in a film, in a manner which resonates with both

[117] Roud, *Passion for Films*, 70.
[118] Ibid., 77.
[119] Dudley Andrew, *Mists of Regret: Culture and Sensibility in Classic French Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 26, 27.
[120] David B. Weisberg, *Chronicles of Disorder: Samuel Beckett and the Cultural Politics of the Modern Novel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 138.
[121] Quoted in Kovács, *Screening Modernism*, 232.
[122] Beckett to Jerome Lindon, 17 February, 1953, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett,* vol. 2, 366.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Beckett to Barbara Bray, 26 March 1959, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 3, 222.

Play and *Marienbad,* as the narrator recalls or imagines scenes transformed in the crucible of his jealous mind. *La Jalousie* exemplified a new literary style which in turn powerfully influenced the new wave of modernist filmmaking – David Bordwell called *Marienbad* 'virtually a Nouveau Roman on film'[125] – enabling first personal camera eye techniques, the circularities, contradictions and blurred distinctions between tenses and narrative time zones, the displacement of story by narrative procedures, and the elimination of psychological histories and character motivations.

I would argue that Beckett drew inspiration less from *Marienbad*'s narrative procedures than the relations it delineates between theatre and film. The film begins in one of the salons where a production of Ibsen's *Rosmersholm* is being performed, and ends by leaving this same production. In one sense, the entire film takes place between two stagings of the play, or possibly during just one. The stage set of the play-within-the-film resembles, in two-dimensional form, the setting of the film, with its corridors, decorations, statues, the garden, its lake and topiary. It sets up a series of relations between one representation, the play, and another, the film. The camera freezes both actors on stage and spectators, amongst whom are included the three central figures of the film: the woman is filmed by the camera as both an actress and a spectator, as are the two other men; a monologue describes what happened last year, while the camera alternates between the frozen action on stage and the parallel event amongst the spectators. The symmetrical blocking of the two male figures in the play is later echoed in a similar staging moments after the play ends. Actions from the play, also apparently about a man's memory and a woman's denial, overseen by a third figure, the woman's husband, are later duplicated in the film.

There is a widespread convergence of theatricality with cinema: *Marienbad* begins and ends with a production of Ibsen's *Rosmersholm,* though it is played in an anti-naturalist, non-psychological manner. These opening and closing scenes thematize the distinction between live and recorded performance to express the central and recurring event: a man tries to convince a woman of their encounter last year at Marienbad, but she denies or cannot remember him. In one view, the film tells the story of a man who saw a woman, an actress, on stage the previous year in a play; the woman, the actress on stage, cannot recall being watched by her obsessive spectator. The transition from live performance, in which performer and spectator are both physically present, and reciprocally aware of one another's presence, to film, where the

[125] David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (London: Routledge, 1985), 276.

actor is both present and absent, there in the image but not there in the room, impervious, inaccessible to the spectator, informs the film's central encounters. The lover behaves like a theatrical spectator, while the actress, ignorant of her spectator since he is not there, performs a filmic spectacle, lit like a Golden Age Hollywood icon in the grand manner of Garbo. The actress on stage playing Ibsen performs for an audience; Seyrig, who mirrors her character, performs for the camera. These shifts between the here-and-now of live performance and the ghostly there-and-then of filmed performance are partly achieved by doubling the camera's point of view, alternately, between the man's and the husband's, and an unnameable third. In its death waltz of circular pans, forward and lateral tracking shots, and meticulous tilts, the variously subjective camera animates actors who are otherwise rigidly defined, frozen or locked into a pose. While the voiceover describes 'nameless phantoms', and 'servants who were motionless, silent, doubtless long dead', the guests behave like ghost-like automata, switched on and off by the staring gaze of the disembodied spectator figure. The three figures play out the eternal scenario of possession, seduction, deviousness and jealousy, each the mediator of the passion and suffering of the other, endlessly repeating their mental rehearsals and ceaseless insatiable torments, frozen out of time, switched on and off by the staring machine.

The sense of theatricality in *Marienbad* – the ritual slowness of gesture, the focus on an audience during a live performance, the echoes of Ibsen and seventeenth-century French classical drama – belongs to a tendency in the modernist cinema of the sixties to cross-pollinate theatricality and film. Certain patterns of mise-en-scène and editing in narrative cinema had rigidified into convention, and filmmakers turned to theatre in search of a renewal of film form. The intensive verbalized drama taking place in a closed environment, staged in long takes with minimal camera movement, such as the later films of Carl Theodor Dreyer, drew on the closed spaces in plays by Ibsen, Strindberg and Sartre, while the films of Godard, Fassbinder, Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet looked towards Brecht as their central example. Straub-Huillet's *Othon* (1970) stages Corneille's play amidst the ruins on Palatine Hill, with the actors in period costume and contemporary Rome clearly visible and audible in the background. Their earlier film *The Bridegroom, the Comedienne and the Pimp* (1968) includes an unedited ten-minute take, a fixed point of view in long shot, of Fassbinder's theatre troupe performing Ferdinand Bruckner's 1926 play *Sickness of Youth* on stage. As regards Fassbinder's own parallel activities, as he put it, 'In theater I would

stage things as though I was doing a film, and then I made a film as though it was on the stage'.[126] Fassbinder used minimalist, artificial production designs in his early films, such as *Katzelmacher* (1969), *The Gods of the Plague* (1970) and *Whity* (1971), in a deliberately theatrical manner; *The Bitter Tears of Petra Von Kant* (1972) is staged in a single room, in manner reminiscent of closed situation drama.

Marienbad is at the forefront of this theatrical turn. Its seventeenth-century baroque production design is a world away from Beckett's minimalist abstraction, yet there are insistent shared concerns in their mutual investigations of theatricality in film. Beckett's *Play* also narrates a love triangle, the banal plot of a thousand melodramas, as an aspect of its formal experiment with mechanical agency and form. Each of the three figures in the urns, two women, one man, thinks they are alone, while the other two live elsewhere; each is summoned by a spotlight to narrate their version of the eternal scenario. As the lover in *Marienbad* remarks, 'we live like two coffins side by side in the frozen ground of a garden'. The figures in the film are doomed endlessly to repeat their takes. 'Last year' is ceaselessly repeated in the present, so many mental rehearsals for scenes which are at once central to the film and absent from it. Similarly, the three figures in Beckett's *Play*, their mud caked faces suggesting burial, are trapped in an endless agony of being perceived by the light, the 'unique inquisitor' (318), and compelled to repeat the entire play as a *da capo*. They exist only when the spotlight is on them, just as Resnais remarks of *Marienbad*'s figures: 'this man and this woman only begin existing when they appear on screen for the first time; prior to that they're nothing, and after the projection is over, they're nothing once again'.[127] As Ruby Cohn argues, the convergence of the diegetic and theatrical situation from *Play* onwards generates a 'theaterreality';[128] for instance, the spotlight in *Play* is both the tormentor but also the cue for the actors. But this reality is also informed by the phenomenology of mechanically reproduced performance. The light in *Play* and the camera eye in *Film* are both imbued with an intentionality, which serves at once as a counterforce to the gesturing body, and provides its only available means of representation. Both works employ a device which combines the human and the mechanical to entrap their figures, like Buster Keaton in *Film*, in an 'anguish of perceivedness' (*Film*, 323) and deny them the chief means of their physical expression, the performative body seen in its totality.

[126] Quoted in Kovács, *Screening Modernism,* 240.
[127] Quoted in Leutrat, *Marienbad*, 30.
[128] Ruby Cohn, *Just Play: Beckett's Theater* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 28.

Beckett and Resnais both resist the performative conventions of their respective forms. In *Marienbad*, a spectator from the theatre is trapped in an eternity of watching actors repeating their takes for the camera, to an audience forever absent or deferred. In *Play,* the light is a mechanism possessed, in its inquiries and its 'slight weakening',[129] of the inconsistencies of human agency, while the actors, drained of all life by the endlessness of their repetition, approach the condition of machines, offering unreflective instantaneous reactions, switching on and off for the device which observes them: 'M: Mere eye. Just looking. At my face. On and off' (317). The situation of the disembodied actor, trapped in an urn, foregrounds a technique for rehearsing actors for the stage practised by Yeats, who 'asked a dramatic company to let me rehearse them in barrels that they might forget gesture'.[130] Yet the mechanical stimulus-response between the light and the actors transfigures their bodies into a condition of static lifelessness. The liveness of the theatrical actor is supplanted by the reified film actor, over-mechanized after endless takes for the staring vision of the machine. This mechanical repetition marks a departure from the earlier versions of repetition in Beckett, the self-conscious theatricality, the performance of rehearsals for an audience in *Godot, Endgame* and *Happy Days*. It is repetition recorded for a machine, rather than an audience, a problem which Beckett had begun to consider in relation to *Happy Days*: 'the first problem was how to have her [Winnie] speak alone on the stage all that time without speaking to herself or to the audience'.[131] This problem becomes the central device in *Play*. The characters address neither the audience nor one another, and remain radically ignorant of either. During rehearsals, Beckett modified the order of the cues in order to 'make it impossible for the actors to take cues from each other but only from the light'.[132]

Beckett wrote *Film* in February 1963, in between the initial composition of *Play* in late 1962–63, and its first production as *Spiel* at the Ulmer-Theater in July 1963. A transferential relation quickly develops between them. He comments in the same letter to Schneider on the first performance of *Spiel* alongside 'the film thing', which has him 'petrified with fright'; in another letter, 'more work on film', and then of the 'slightly revised version of *Play*' and the *da capo*.[133] Production on *Film* began on 20 July 1964, three months after the first English staging of

[129] *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett: The Shorter Plays*, ed. S.E. Gontarski (London: Faber & Faber, 1999), xxii.
[130] W.B. Yeats, *Explorations* (London: Macmillan, 1962), 82.
[131] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 9 December 1960, Harmon, *No Author Better Served*, 77.
[132] John Calder, letter to the TLS, 23 April 1964, Gontarki, ed., *Theatrical Notebooks: Shorter Plays,* xxii.
[133] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 11 May 1963, Harmon, *No Author Better Served*, 136–137.

Play at the Old Vic. Two years later, in January 1966, he co-directs with Marin Karmitz a film of *Comédie*. After the problems of technique and execution in the production of *Film*, the making of *Comédie,* a highly technical project involving filmmakers at the vanguard of contemporary modernist film, excited Beckett during a period of exhaustion with the management and approval of theatrical productions of his work: 'Making a little film of Play with young technique hogs. Not unexciting'.[134]

Karmitz had previously worked on films by Roberto Rossellini, Jean-Luc Godard and Marguerite Duras. For Karmitz, the project represented an opportunity to bring together certain aesthetic tendencies between Beckett and the cinema of the nouvelle vague: 'There was, in the late 50s, an incredible moment in the functioning of the French culture, which has not been dealt with as much as it should; the Nouveau Roman, Beckett's and Ionesco's theatre […] the Nouvelle Vague in cinema.'[135] Karmitz had begun a dialogue on the new language of modernist cinema with Duras during the making of *Nuit Noire, Calcutta* (1964) which, he claims, she continued to develop 'when she herself became a filmmaker'; Beckett, according to Karmitz, also continued to develop as a filmmaker after their collaboration: 'This is what Beckett also became after our working together.' The avant-garde in contemporary French cinema, in Karmitz's account, was built on a 'constant complicity […] a true interest from the filmmakers in the writers and reciprocally' and 'linked with a number of editors and producers': working with Beckett, as with Duras, marked an extension of this complicity between writers, filmmakers and technicians and, as Karmitz puts it, Beckett and he 'went very far in the process of a common relationship between filmmakers and writers'.[136] The film's production was characterized by extended 'conversations about how to direct';[137] Beckett was clearly deeply involved in the film's production, and 'would be present on the shooting set all the time'.[138]

In the film, Eleonore Hirt played First Woman, Delphine Seyrig, Second Woman and Michael Lonsdale, Man. This was the original cast of Serreau's 1964 *Comédie*: for the 1966 reprise for the stage, Serreau replaced Seyrig with Danielle van Bercheyke, but Beckett insisted on Seyrig for the film, signalling the importance of her persona to the film's effect. After *Marienbad*, Seyrig had

[134] Beckett to Nicholas Rawson, 25 December 1965, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett,* vol. 3, 682.
[135] Caroline Bourgeois, ed., *Comédie/Marin Karmitz/Samuel Beckett* (Paris: Editions du Regard, 2001), 70–76.
[136] Ibid., 71.
[137] Ibid., 72–73.
[138] Ibid., 71.

become an icon of cinematic modernism, going on to star in Resnais' *Muriel* (1963), Buñuel's *Discreet Charm of the Bourgeiosie* (1972), Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai Du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975) and Marguerite Duras' *India Song* (1975). Just as the Keaton star persona enriches the effect in *Film*, so does Seyrig's star persona, created in her collaboration with Resnais, inflect the film of *Comédie*. Beckett, as demonstrated in his collaboration with Keaton on *Film*, was evidently aware of the effect of a star's successive incarnations and personae. He greatly admired Seyrig – as well as her role in *Marienbad*, she had helped raise funds for the first production of *Godot*[139] – and he would direct her again in the 1978 Théâtre d'Orsay production of *Footfalls*: after its premiere, he told James Knowlson that he 'loved working with her'[140] and that she remained one of his 'favourite actresses'.[141]

During post-production, Beckett asks that *Comédie* and *Film* be screened together. While busy 'preparing and shooting film of *Play*', he congratulates Schneider on winning the prestigious Tours prize for *Film*: 'those of the *Play* crew who saw it were impressed – and they were hardboiled. I'm glad it's free to be shown with *Play*. Making this [film of *Play*] was exciting and I'm pleased with the result. 10 more days of finicking and lab and there'll be a screening with *Film* for friends.'[142] A year later, in a telling contrast, he refused Roman Polanski's request to make a film of *Godot*: 'it is simply not cinema material. And adaptation would destroy it.'[143] The admission to being 'pleased with the result' of his own adaptation of *Comédie* for the screen suggests a quality in the work not incompatible with 'cinema material', in the way he absolutely found *Godot* to be, an authorial counter-argument against his much-cited remark on generic distinctions: 'if we can't keep our genres more or less distinct, or extricate them from the confusion that has them where they are, we might as well go home and lie down.'[144] Beckett's film of *Comédie,* its refined awareness of film technique in its use of close-ups, dolly shots and complex editing patterns, and its screening alongside *Film,* compel a reassessment of his often-cited inflexibility on the matter of genre adaptation, and suggest a heightened awareness of recent experiments in film form.

A central point of focus in the discussions between Beckett and Karmitz, during production of the film, was on 'the abandonment of filmed theatre. On

[139] Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, 386.
[140] Ibid., 657.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 11 February 1966, Harmon, *No Author Better Served*, 198.
[143] Beckett to Jack MacGowran, 13 December 1967, quoted in Jordan Young, *The Beckett Actor*: *Jack MacGowran, Beginning to End* (Beverley Hills: Moonstone, 1987), 120.
[144] Beckett to Barney Rosset, 27 August 1957, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 3, 64.

what cinema, image and editing could bring'.[145] For both Beckett and Karmitz, it was essential that they avoid a straightforward film of the stage production, but that they develop particular techniques in order to translate the work into cinema. The volume and speed of the three figures' voices were electronically altered by a machine, the 'phonogene'; as Karmitz puts it, 'we introduced the whole piece in the machine and tried to speed up the rhythm without losing the tones of the voices'.[146] Beckett also worked very closely with the film's editor, Jean Ravel, highly regarded for his work on Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962), to develop a Cubist approach to editing, one of the film's most distinctive innovations. Beckett eliminated the Light in the stage version and replaced it with a tightly controlled montage, along a single plane or axis. Characters are framed in extreme close-up and are brightly lit when they speak; these shots are cut together with medium shots of the silent figures, dimly lit and constantly visible throughout, and long shots, where the figures are barely visible at all. The effect was achieved by dollying the camera forwards for the close-up, then back again; the effect, in the final edit, is instantaneous. In the film of *Comédie*, it is the editor who assumes the privileged controlling function of the spotlight inquisitor in the stage version.

Beckett's fascination with editing was long-standing, and dates back to his 1936 letter to Eisenstein, where he expresses a primary interest 'in the scenario and editing'[147] element of filmmaking. There are several references in Beckett's letters to the process of editing *Film* on a moviola, the film industry standard editing machine until the 1970s – 'will be movieoling it',[148] 'Laying on movieola for next Sunday'[149] – and during post-production on *Film*, over 'detailed technical discussions',[150] he formed a close friendship with the film's editor, Sidney Meyers. As well as editing and directing, Meyers also wrote critical essays on the 'subject of literature and editing', 'the similarity between literary editing and film editing' and the 'marked cross influence of one medium on the other and a combined interconnected development'.[151] Beckett and Meyers remained friends and correspondents until his death, when Beckett wrote, 'the announcement at his graveside before strangers, of even a small part of what I felt for him, was something I could not bear the thought of'.[152]

[145] Bourgeois, ed., *Comédie/Marin Karmitz/Samuel Beckett*, 72–73.
[146] Ibid., 73.
[147] Beckett to Sergei Eisenstein, 2 February 1936, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 1, 317.
[148] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 3 March 1965, Harmon, *No Author Better Served,* 186.
[149] Beckett to Barbara Bray, 22 September 1964, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett,* vol. 3, 627.
[150] Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, 525.
[151] Jay Leyda, 'Vision is My Dwelling Place', *Film Culture*, 58 (1974), 27.
[152] Ibid.

The irony of editing *Film*, as Erik Tonning points out, is that 'the two camera visions are so specifically tied to particular points of view that […] Beckett could not make systematic use of the "montage" – like techniques that he had successfully transposed into a theatrical format in *Play*'.[153] *Film* represents an extension of the thinking in *Play* in as much as the action is focalized through an observing machine, but it could not, due to the restrictions of the subjective camera, achieve the equivalent level of complexity of the speech patterns in *Play,* which are intercut in a manner which suggests an application of visual editing techniques to verbal material. In the stage version, the Light effectively cuts each of the three monologues into fragments, as well as intercutting those fragments with the choral sections where the three speak in unison. Phrases repeat and modify in a complex montage of voices: it was this montage-like technique which guided Beckett, during the several early drafts, towards the playscript's final form. In those early drafts, the characters speak in continuous blocks of speech; as the drafts progressed, Beckett broke up those monologues into fragments, added the choral elements and re-organized the entire play according to recurring themes and motifs.[154] In this respect, the speech montage in the stage version was peculiarly well suited to an equivalent montage, on the level of the image, in the film of *Comédie*.

Karmitz described the process which enabled the speaking characters in close-up to appear in the same frame as the two silent characters in medium-shot: 'We had another problem, which was to be able to bring the presence of the other two characters on the screen when they were not speaking. I could only manage through some technical trick, which was re-encrusting all the three characters in the same image.'[155] The film contains 250 separate shots, but they are edited together, using the 're-encrusting' method, to appear in a single frame throughout. He called this process, which enables the simultaneous framing of multiple shot lengths, a 'collage'; it is a method which resembles, as Graley Herren suggests, a 'cubist' technique,[156] and in this respect, *Comédie* again bears comparison with the innovative cinematic syntax of *Marienbad*. For David Bordwell, the film's splitting of image from sound, the manipulation of perspective generated by false eyeline matches, the refusal to delineate a coherent off-screen space and the constant shift between tenses and point

[153] Erik Tonning, *Samuel Beckett's Abstract Drama: Works for Stage and Screen, 1962–1985* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), 92.
[154] Ibid., 77–80.
[155] Bourgeois, ed., *Comédie/Marin Karmitz/Samuel Beckett*, 75.
[156] Graley Herren, 'Different Music: Karmitz and Beckett's Film Adaptation of *Comédie*', *Journal of Beckett Studies*, 18.1–2 (2009), 22.

of view generate what he also calls a 'cubist' effect.[157] The serial variations in *Marienbad,* which mirror the circularities and discrepancies in the characters' narration, yet flatten out the succession of tenses – 'a present of past, a present of present and a present of future'[158] – into a simultaneous present, resemble the cubist 're-encrusting' in *Comédie*, which cuts between mismatched points of view and narrative timelines in the past tense, yet encloses surface variants of scale and shot size, at once proximately close and distantly estranged, within a single frame.

[157] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 277.

[158] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London: Athlone Press, 1989), 101.

2

Self-Perception and Asynchronous Sound: Godard, Hitchcock, Resnais

Beckett's first encounter with filmmaking marks a crucial shift in his sense of the convergences between theatre and film, a transition marked by the beginning of his career as a director. After working as assistant director on Donald McWhinnie's BBC version of *Eh Joe*, broadcast on BBC 2, 4 July 1966, with Jack MacGowran as Joe and Sian Philips as Voice, Beckett then directs the German *He Joe* for SDR, with Deryk Mendel as Joe and Nancy Illig as Voice, broadcast prior to the BBC version on 13 April 1966. The BBC production of *Eh Joe* overlapped with the shooting of *Comédie* – 'Preparing & shooting here film of Play. Then London for Eh Joe with Jack'[1] – and it allowed him to modify and extend some of the innovative techniques he had developed in his filmmaking practice, particularly as regards the agency and operation of the camera. Jonathan Bignell has argued for the status of *Eh Joe* 'as television rather than cinema or theatre',[2] pointing to the conditions of its production in a television studio, and the significance of the videotape format, which gives 'less tonal depth and capacity for contrast than film cameras'.[3] Yet Bignell also notes Beckett's resistance to the period's conventions of television broadcasting: 'over the years from *Eh Joe* in 1966 to *Quad* in 1982, the screening of his work looked increasingly anomalous as anthology strands such as *The Wednesday Play* and *Play for Today* became the dominant vehicles within BBC schedules for original dramas'.[4] I would argue that what makes Beckett's television so distinct and anomalous is precisely its resort to techniques active in the modernist cinema

[1] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 11 February 1966, Maurice Harmon, *No Author Better Served: The Correspondence of Samuel Beckett and Alan Schneider* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 198.

[2] Jonathan Bignell, *Beckett on Screen: The Television Plays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 27.

[3] Ibid., 25.

[4] Ibid., 55.

of the period, which Beckett encountered during the making of *Film* and *Comédie*. In fact, after *Eh Joe*, Beckett shot his British television productions on 35 mm film cameras, during a period when television drama was ordinarily shot on video.[5]

Distinctions critics have drawn between Beckett's film and television work are less important, in my view, than the similarities of camera operation and editing. In this respect, Beckett's work for TV also belongs to the context of his own long-standing interest in filmmaking. Beckett talked in 1964 of writing a piece combining a camera dolly, having witnessed its operation on the set of *Film* and *Comédie*, with an interior voiceover.[6] The tracking shot is also one of Resnais' signature techniques in *Nuit et Brouillard, Hiroshima Mon Amour* and *L'Année dernière à Marienbad.* In *Eh Joe*, the camera dollies towards a 'maximum close-up of face' (361) – the directions in the script specifying 'four inches each time' for each of the 'nine slight moves in towards the face' (361) – during an interior monologue, devised prior to the division into nine camera moves.[7] While there is nothing comparable in the TV of the period, the split between sound and image is closer to techniques in the cinema of the period.

The centrality of the close-up in *Eh Joe,* again, is discussed by critics in the context of television. As Roger Brown notes, 'if television is less successful than the cinema in presenting scenic panoramas, it may be at least equally good at bringing out the full force of a tense dramatic situation seen in close-up in the faces of protagonists, and boxed in by the smallness of a room'.[8] Alan Plater argues that 'the thing that works best on television is a face talking – whether it's in a play or with newsreel cameras or anything – just a face talking, just a face looking. Eyes and a mouth'.[9] Yet the close-up of the face originates in, and is absolutely central to, cinema from D.W. Griffith, Buster Keaton, Sergei Eisenstein and Carl Dreyer, to Jean-Luc Godard, Alfred Hitchcock and Alain Resnais. Martin Esslin's view that the close-up of the face in *Eh Joe* is inherently more suited to TV than film – 'the concentration on a single close-up growing larger and larger would be intolerable on the huge cinema screen'[10] – is, I would

[5] Ibid., 31.

[6] Michael Geliot, interview on 7 September 1966, quoted in Clas Zilliacus, *Beckett and Broadcasting* (Abo: Abo Akademi, 1976), 183.

[7] S.E. Gontarski, *The Intent of Undoing in Samuel Beckett's Dramatic Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 117.

[8] Quoted in Anna McMullan, *Performing Embodiment in Samuel Beckett* (London: Routledge, 2007), 93.

[9] Quoted in Bignell, *Beckett on Screen*, 54.

[10] Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964), 82–83. See also Jonathan Kalb, *Beckett in Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 91.

suggest, misleading: that the close-up in *Eh Joe* is 'intolerable' is precisely what is required of the piece. In this respect, *Eh Joe* bears resemblance to Carl Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1927). Beckett is likely to have been alerted to this film, especially given his fascination with 'the two-dimensional silent film', through studying the film journal *Close Up*, in which H.D. venerates Dreyer's masterpiece as 'one of the most exquisite and consistent works of screen art'.[11] Dreyer's film, though silent, is largely speech-based, cutting between the relentless questioning of Joan's prosecutors and the unrelieved tension and unflinching intentness of the camera's scrutiny as it captures her reactions. A sense of the remorselessness of her accusers, and the claustrophobia of her situation, is generated by filming the actress Falconetti almost entirely in close-ups of her face, which become tighter as her situation worsens, and reach a 'maximum close-up' just before she is led into the torture chamber. The geometric framing and the cell-like abstractions of white and grey in *Joan of Arc* pre-echo the mise-en-scène of *Eh Joe*.

The Passion of Joan of Arc was one of the key films of the silent film revival at the Cinémathèque Française. A huge poster of Falconetti as Joan dominated Langlois' 1955 'Sixty Years of Cinema' exhibition. An extended clip of the film appears eight years later, without any musical accompaniment, an homage to Langlois' screening of silent films without music, in Jean-Luc Godard's *Vivre Sa Vie* (1963). Beckett does not mention *Vivre Sa Vie,* though he was clearly aware of Godard, citing him years later in a letter to Alan Schneider in a discussion of a remake of *Film*: 'Cameraman Raoul Coutard, Godard's cameraman'.[12] Anna Karina, playing Nana, a young Parisian shop girl who dreams of becoming an actress but falls into prostitution, visits the cinema to watch *Joan of Arc*. Godard intersects Falconetti and Karina, and by extension first and second wave modernism, cross-cutting between extreme close-ups of Karina watching the screen, and extreme close-ups of Falconetti as Joan: both faces are subjected, as in *Eh Joe*, to the relentless, frontal interrogation of the camera. Despite radical differences of technique, there are implicit convergences and overlaps between *Vivre Sa Vie, Joan of Arc* and *Eh Joe*. Each is an exploration of the human face under inquisition and filmed in intense close-up; in each, the camera is possessed of an agency which interrogates and torments the characters, who at key moments appear to be aware of its presence and attempt to resist its prying gaze. Joan is cruelly subjected to interrogation and torture by her male judges, while Karina is exploited by her clients and finally by her murderous pimp. In the scene where she is arrested, we see Karina's face,

[11] H.D., 'Joan of Arc', *Close Up,* 3.1 (1928), repr. Marcus et al., *Close Up,* 131.
[12] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 1 February 1983, Harmon, *No Author Better Served*, 442.

frontally framed, in a sequence beginning in medium close-up; while the police interrogate her, the camera moves forward in a series of shots until Karina's face fills the frame, a 'maximum close up'. The tight framing of Karina and Falconetti mimes their rigid entrapment in the borders of patriarchal oppression. By turning the tables on one of those male oppressors, Beckett's tight framing of Joe can be read as an ironic reversal of the situation in Dreyer and Godard. In *Eh Joe,* it is a female voice which holds a male captive, pitilessly interrogating him for his crimes against a woman, rigidly entrapping him in a merciless and intrusive close-up.

The reference to the opening sequence in the script as a 'pursuit' (361) echoes the pursuit of O by E in *Film*. Like O, Joe carefully ensures he is not being watched, closing the door, checking the lock and drawing the curtains. Deryk Mendel in the SDR version avoids the camera's gaze as long as he can, as though aware of its presence while concealing himself from view. In the BBC *Joe*, we first see MacGowran from behind, from an angle reminiscent of E trailing O in *Film.* In the opening shot of *Vivre Sa Vie*, Karina similarly withholds her face, as she sits at a bar with a former lover and conducts an extended conversation with her back to the camera. Throughout the film, Godard thematizes the relation between the subject and the camera as an observing consciousness by assiduously avoiding the standard shot-reverse-shot technique and other classical methods of scene construction. There are only two scenes in the film where a conversation is filmed in the shot-reverse-shot convention, and one is the *Joan of Arc* sequence. The credit sequence presents Karina in three separate close-up views, in self-consciously portrait-like shots, as though she is posing for a photograph or a painting, in full awareness of an observing eye; another sequence films a dialogue by laterally tracking between the two subjects; in a later dialogue sequence, the camera slowly tracks forward towards the subject in an unusually long take. These scenes draw attention to the camera in a manner which is alien to classical scene construction and its requirement that the camera remain an invisible presence. Rather than effacing the presence of the camera, Godard highlights the procedures by which the camera can stand in for the self-consciousness of the characters and their awareness of being watched. The camera, with its angle of view on the subject, both stands for an interrogatory outside-ness, but also the self-conscious inside-ness of subjects alert to their own self-perceivedness.

As in the double aspect of *Film,* which is simultaneously about the fictional character O and the documentary situation of the actor Buster Keaton, each of these three films thematizes the doubleness of character and actor. In this respect, Kaja Silverman's description of *Vivre Sa Vie* as a 'documentary of the human face' could also apply to *Joan of Arc* and *Eh Joe*: each film interrogates

both the fictional subject, but also the actor placed under certain conditions, and each uses the reality of the actor's face and gestures to deepen the portrait of the fictional character. Silverman argues that it is 'the mystery of the actress rather than the mystery of the character which is being plumbed […] the mystery of Nana as the mystery of Anna Karina'.[13] The pro-filmic situation becomes the main subject of the film: as Godard puts it, the film tells 'the story of a woman who sells her body while keeping her soul', but it is also about 'an actor [who] exists independently of me […] I try to make use of that existence and to shape things around it so that [s]he can continue to exist within the character [s]he plays'.[14] Godard greatly admired the self-reflexive cinema vérité style pioneered by Robert Flaherty and Jean Rouch; as Andras Kovacs points out, 'the fact that visual segments of real life […] can be loosely put side by side and organized by a subjective voice-over or onscreen narrative attracted Godard to a great extent'. As Godard himself put it, referring to the difference between his work and cinéma vérité filmmakers such as Flaherty and Rouch, 'they take the characters from reality and make a fictional story with them. It is somewhat like what I do, but just in the opposite way: I took fictional characters, and I made a story with them that in a way looked like a documentary.'[15]

David Sterritt re-names the documentary-effect in *Vivre Sa Vie* 'thêâtre-vérité': the elements of the film where the subject is Karina rather than Nana resemble 'the arbitrariness of stage drama unfolding in continuous blocks that cannot be retouched by the director'.[16] Dreyer employs a similar technique, as Sterritt notes:

> by taking repeated shots of arduously dramatic moments under physically demanding conditions, he subjected Falconetti to hardships almost as difficult and unpleasant (though of course not so terrifying and interminable) as some of those that were inflicted on the real-life character she portrayed. The result is a performance that partakes, in a small but authentic way, of the awful ordeal it is meant to represent.

Unlike Falconneti/Joan, whose face openly demonstrates affective response, Joe's face should remain, according to the stage directions, 'practically motionless throughout' (362). But in both the BBC and SDR versions, the actor playing

[13] Kaja Silverman and Harun Farocki, *Speaking About Godard* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 2.

[14] Jean Narboni and Tom Milne, eds, *Godard on Godard* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1972), 32.

[15] András Bálint Kovács, *Screening Modernism: European Art Cinema 1950–1980* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 170.

[16] David Sterritt, *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 64–65.

Joe makes nervous, give-away hand gestures at significant moments in the monologue, gestures which intersect with a movement of the camera. Beckett did not write stage directions for Joe's hands, so the movements can only be read in the performance of the actor. These reactive scriptless gestures, a version of 'théâtre-vérité', are infrequent in Beckettian performance, and occur not on stage but before a camera, further defining and strengthening the interrelations between theatre and film in his late work.

We observe both Jack Macgowran and Derek Mendel, like Karina and Falconetti, reacting to the liveness of their situation, which is also the act of being invasively filmed up close. Joe's hand gestures are the sole register of his awareness and discomfort at being watched. They also imply an agency in the camera movement which seeks coldly to scrutinize and entrap him. In the BBC *Eh Joe*, as the monologue begins, MacGowran's hands, as inscrutable as his face, are clenched tightly as he listens. On the last line of the section marked 'Camera move 2', he begins to run his hands through his hair. The third camera move dollies towards him and his hands freeze. The last line of 'Camera move 3' is similarly accompanied by a gesture: he holds his brow between thumb and forefinger, the camera then tracks forward, his hand freezes, moves down away from his face, clenches and moves out of view. Again, 'Camera move 5' is immediately preceded by a gesture – MacGowran pulls together his collar – which then freezes on the dolly. In each instance, the hand gestures are quickly followed by a camera movement, as though the gesture simultaneously announces or conducts the camera's move, before it is arrested once the movement begins. The division implies that the camera not only catches Joe off-guard, but also, as a spectatorial entity reacting to his hands, serves as an extension of Joe's agency, that it is in a sense himself who watches. Beckett further develops the innovation in *Film* which shows the image through the introceptive focal point of the protagonist's alter ego, as a replication of vision from the inside. He shows us Joe's thoughts, as it were, from the inside, by a simple contradiction: he ensures that Joe is absolutely alone in the room, and then imbues the staring machine with its own embodied agency. In this respect, again, the technique bears comparison with Godard. Asked in an interview about whether he would define the character as an inside seen from the outside, he replied, 'For me, it's the inside seen from the inside. One should be with him, see things from his point of view while the external story unfolds. The film is like a secret diary, a notebook, or the monologue of someone trying to justify himself before an almost accusing camera, as one does before a lawyer or a psychiatrist.'[17]

[17] Narboni and Milne, eds, *Godard on Godard*, 179.

The double element of *Vivre Sa Vie* as fiction and as a théâtre-vérité portrait of an actor under scrutiny sharply comes into focus in a scene towards the end between Nana and a young man who is reading Edgar Allan Poe's *The Oval Portrait.* Nana and the man speak to each other through intertitles, in the style of the earlier scene from *Joan of Arc*. The diegetic sound is then replaced with a voiceover: in his own voice, over images or 'portraits' of Karina posing, Godard recounts Poe's story of an artist labouring to paint his wife's portrait, only to find she has died on its completion. By addressing Karina, his wife, directly – he tells her the painter portraying his love is 'our story' – Godard incorporates Poe's tale of the mortifying representation of a live actor or model into the pro-filmic event. Here, as elsewhere in the film, the technique derives from the separation of voice from image. As Susan Sontag notes of *Vivre Sa Vie* 'Godard takes this technique of hearing first, then seeing, to new levels of complexity. There is no longer a single unified point of view, either the protagonist's voice (in *Le Petit Soldat*) or a godlike narrator, but a series of documents […] of various description.'[18] It is a central technique in Godard, Resnais and other modernist filmmakers, and it is an aspect of their retrospective sympathy with silent film culture's resistance to synchronized speech.

The uncoupling of voice and image is a signature technique in Beckett's work both for television and for the stage. During production on *Eh Joe*, he worked separately on image then sound: while shooting Deryk Mendel for the SDR *Eh Joe* in April 1966, he was asked a question about Nancy Illig's Voice, to which he replied, 'today I'm concentrating on the picture'. Joe listens in silence and reacts to a voice which emerges, like Godard's, from no perceptible source. As Deleuze notes of the 'silent image' in general, it is 'composed from the seen image, and the intertitle which is read […] the intertitle includes, among other elements, speech-acts'.[19] In *Joan of Arc,* the intertitles only give a fraction of what is said by the prosecutors, whose lips are constantly seen in motion, and often in close-up. Joan often seems as deaf as the spectator to their voices. In several instances, she seems not to hear them: the noise of her accusers appears to be drowned out by an unspoken interior voice only she can hear. The situation is reversed in *Eh Joe*: the voice in his head is audible, but we cannot see to whom it belongs. It could be a composite voice, or the voice of conscience, inflected by the memory trace of a woman from his past. The opposite of Joan's consolatory interior voice, heard neither by her prosecutors nor by the viewer of the film, and of Godard's

[18] Susan Sontag, 'Godard's Vivre Sa Vie', *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Picador, 1966), 198.

[19] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London: Athlone Press, 1989), 225.

loving voiceover which directly addresses his wife, it is rather the voice of Joe's accuser, putting him on trial for the death of the girl by the sea, compelling him to imagine the girl's attempted suicides and then her final moments after she takes the tablets and walks to the shore:

> Now *imagine*…. Before she goes…. Face in the cup…. Lips on a *stone*…. Taking Joe with her…. Light gone…. '*Joe Joe*'…. No sound…. To the *stones*… Say it you now, no one'll hear you…. Say 'Joe' it parts the *lips*… *Imagine* the hands…. The *solitaire*…. Against a *stone*…. Imagine the *eyes*…. Spiritlight…. Month of June … what year of your Lord? … *Breasts* in the stones…. And the *hands*…. Before they go…. *Imagine* the hands…. What are they at? … In the *stones*…. (366–67)

As Joe was not present at the girl's suicide, Voice presides over a secondary reconstruction of the scene in the style of a tragic silent film melodrama. The last words she utters, '*Joe Joe*', are envisaged as the inaudible speech of a figure in a silent film: her words 'part the lips' but 'no sound' is heard. Narrative voice transforms into camera eye, cutting together a series of long and medium shots with close-ups of her face, her lips, hands, eyes. A full account of the death in its circumstantial detail imbues the scene with a melodramatic intensity designed to elicit Joe's identification. Voice carefully organizes the optics of the girl's attempted suicide, its minute details of vision and place: it is a 'warm summer night', she is 'sitting on the edge of her bed in her lavender slip', before going 'down the garden and under the viaduct'. Only the essential visual details are assembled: 'cut a long story short doesn't work'. The girl then 'get[s] out the Gillette' and 'takes the blade from the holder and lies down at the edge on her side […] tears a strip from the slip […] Slip clinging the way wet silk will' (365–67). Voice's richly detailed mise-en-scène challenges Joe to identify with the experience of the girl, to see her experience from the inside; yet by presenting the scene as a secondary reconstruction, she reminds him sharply of his outside-ness, his status as a spectator unable to alter the course of an event for which he is responsible. The imagined film sequence, with its many cuts and perspectival shifts, contrasts with the intense scrutiny of the long single take of Joe, which Beckett emphasized by eliminating all cutting in the original script before Joe settles in front of the camera: 'It is a single unbroken shot. The camera follows Joe from behind round the room and when he gets to the bed and sits down again he has his face turned towards camera now in position for the nine moves in […] camera always moving with Joe and stopping when he stops.'[20] Visually, the focus is on Joe as a spectator: we watch him as he in turn watches an imaginary scenario over which he has no

[20] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 7 April 1966, Harmon, *No Author Better Served*, 201.

control. It is, as Anna McMullan puts it, 'an ironic portrayal of the myth of male subjective autonomy'.[21] By framing Joe, rather than the girl, and by having a female voice dictate the viewing conditions, the film disrupts the conventional gender hierarchies in cinema whereby the female is held fast by a determining male gaze.

The Voice in *Eh Joe* is an example of what Michel Chion calls the 'acousmatic' voice: it is the voice which is heard while its cause or source remains unseen. According to Chion, the acousmatic voice, or 'acousmêtre', is characterized by 'ubiquity, panopticism, omniscience, and omnipotence';[22] it exercises complete power over the subjects in the visual field by virtue of the privileged vantage point granted by its absence from the visible frame. As its body is immaterial, 'the limits of [its] role, [its] position, [its] power' remain undefined.[23] In film history, the acousmêtre, as in *Eh Joe*, is often the voice of a dead person, narrating the events of the film from beyond the grace, as for instance William Holden's voice in Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard*, or Rex Harrison's in Joseph L. Mankiewicz's *The Honey Pot* (1967). The voices in these films direct the spectator's identification by haunting the visual frame, blending first person accounts with pseudo-omniscient narrative voice. But the convention in mainstream cinema, as Kaja Silverman points out, predominately allocates the privileged, all-powerful, immaterial acousmêtre to the male voice, while the female voice is ordinarily visible and embodied, and as a consequence more vulnerable: 'This opposition expresses itself through the close identification of the female voice with spectacle and the body, and a certain aspiration of the male voice to invisibility and anonymity.'[24] This opposition is an aspect of the patriarchal system of mainstream cinema, whereby the female subject is caught in a male gaze often framed through an acousmêtre. In her influential essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', Laura Mulvey argues that 'in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female'.[25] But in *Eh Joe*, it is the female voice which actively reconstructs the scene and which gazes upon a passive male figure: as Trish McTighe puts it, 'it is Joe who becomes the spectacle while that active/passive heterosexual division of labour on screen that Laura Mulvey describes […] is disrupted and undermined'.[26]

[21] McMullan, *Performing Embodiment*, 96.

[22] Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 24.

[23] Ibid., 100.

[24] Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 39.

[25] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), 45.

[26] Trish McTighe, *The Haptic Aesthetic in Samuel Beckett's Drama* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 41.

In the acousmêtre of the classical narrative cinema, the visible speaking body is usually only temporarily withheld. An early example of this occurs in Fritz Lang's *M* (1931) – a film Beckett saw and admired[27] – when the child-killer's shadow falls on the reward poster for his capture. A long while before we see Peter Lorre in the role, we hear his acousmatic voice speaking to a little girl – 'You have a pretty ball' – before he abducts her. Conventionally, at the point at which the visible body of the voice is revealed, for example, in Lang's *The Testament of Dr Mabuse* (1933), Victor Fleming's *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and Max Ophuls' *Le Plaisir* (1952) – the character is re-assigned to an 'ordinary fate, taking away his mythic aura and putative powers'.[28] What is unusual about the acousmêtre in *Eh Joe* is that the speaking voice is never revealed, and so the limits of her power over Joe remain unlimited; also unusual is how the voiceover does not speak in Joe's voice, preventing, as Anna McMullan puts it, 'any immediate identification with Joe's interior thoughts and confirming the sense within the text that Joe is haunted or possessed by the voices of others from his past'.[29] In this respect, the reversal of the convention whereby a voiceover speaks in the voice of the visible figure strikingly resembles the final scene of Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960).

In the final scene of *Psycho*, Norman Bates is in a police cell which is bare, grey, abstract, as in *Eh Joe*. As with Joe, he is frontally placed, facing the camera which slowly and steadily tracks forward towards a close-up of his face, while the voice of Norman Bates' mother speaks as an interior monologue voiceover:

> It's sad … when a mother has to speak the words that condemn her own son … but I couldn't allow them to believe that I would commit murder. [A pause] They'll put him away now … as I should have … years ago. He was always … bad. And in the end, he intended to tell them I killed those girls … and that man. As if I could do anything except just sit and stare … like one of his stuffed birds. [A pause] Well, they know I can't even move a finger. And I won't. I'll just sit here and be quiet. Just in case they do … suspect me […] They're probably watching me. Well, let them. Let them see what kind of a person I am.[30]

The near-abstract cell-like room in *Eh Joe*, the slow track towards a close-up of a face listening to a tormenting female acousmêtre: these undeniable parallels strongly suggest that Beckett had seen *Psycho*. Beckett's instructions for the

[27] James Knowlson and John Pilling, *Frescoes of the Skull: The Later Prose and Drama of Samuel Beckett* (London: Calder Publications, 1979), 122.
[28] Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, 100.
[29] McMullan, *Performing Embodiment*, 94.
[30] Joseph Stefano, *Psycho* (1959), http://www.imsdb.com/scripts/Psycho.html.

Voice in *Eh Joe* – 'very low throughout – plenty of venom'[31] – recall the dead mother's dry, insistent, lacerating voice in *Psycho*. Voice, in Beckett's words, is 'a dead voice in his head'. His characterization of Voice as 'Attacking. Each sentence a knife going in, pause for withdrawal, then in again'[32] even suggests the famous shower scene in *Psycho* where the monstrous female silhouette attacks Janet Leigh with a knife. In the film's final shot, after the mother's monologue has ended, Bates looks up and directly into the camera and smiles: it is an effect Beckett had in mind for *Eh Joe* when he wrote 'Smile at very end when voice stops'.[33]

As Chion puts it in his analysis, 'the mother in *Psycho* is first and foremost a voice'.[34] In order to emphasize the sadistic dominance of her voice over her son, the powerful acousmatic effect in the final scene is foreshadowed in various earlier scenes involving other characters. When Marion Crane (Janet Leigh), having stolen money from her boss, is driving to Bates' Motel, her guilt uncouples the image from the sound: we see her silent, expressionless face in close-up, listening to acousmatic voices discussing her disappearance and the money she has stolen. The voices are in her head and this is signalled, as Chion demonstrates, by the use of the auditory conventions of reverb and vocal filtering,[35] thereby allowing the image safely to contain the voices. In contradistinction, the mother's voice in the final scene is heard as an auditory close-up, with no filters or effects: here, it is the voice which contains the image. The face of Bates is summoned by and subservient to the voice. This sense that the voice cannot be mastered or contained, that it exists as an entity outside or beyond the mind of the male subject, clearly resonates in *Eh Joe* when Voice says, 'You know that penny farthing hell you call your mind…. That's where you think this is coming from, don't you?' (362).

Joe's face is also Hitchcockian in the way he listens intently to the voice without reacting or expressing emotion. In an extended interview with François Truffaut, Hitchcock discusses this method of performative neutrality, singling out a scene from *Sabotage* (1936) after the woman has killed her husband: 'the wrong way to go about this scene would have been the heroine conveying her inner feelings to the audience by her facial expression. I'm against that. In real life, people's faces don't reveal what they think or feel. As a film director I must try to convey

[31] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 11 February 1966, Harmon, *No Author Better Served,* 198.
[32] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 7 April 1966, ibid., 201.
[33] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 11 February 1966, Harmon, *No Author Better Served,* 198.
[34] Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, 140.
[35] Ibid., 52.

this woman's frame of mind to the audience by purely cinematic means.'[36] In the interview, Truffaut discusses the technical challenge of filming *Rear Window* (1954) from the perspective of one man, and *Vertigo* (1958), where the lead character attempts to re-create the image of a dead woman: 'In both films, James Stewart isn't required to emote; he simply looks.'[37] The method is also used to structure the trial sequence in *Dial M for Murder* (1954), which again echoes the situation in *Eh Joe*: we hear the acousmatic voices of Grace Kelly's accusers over a series of close-ups of her face against an abstract background. As Jonathan Kalb notes, Joe 'continues to avoid immediate, straightforward facial reactions […] finding instead enigmatic gestures that frustrate, as if intentionally, any attempts to "see into" the interaction between him and Voice'.[38]

Before the final revelation that Norman Bates had long since killed his mother and committed the murders himself while dressed in her clothes and possessed by her personality, we hear her voice twice, as an acousmêtre not yet attached to a body. Much of the film's suspense depends on the delay between hearing the mother's voice and awaiting her appearance. We hear conversations and arguments between Bates and his mother; we only ever see a shadowy figure at the window, or a figure being carried by Bates in an indistinct overhead long shot. As Chion explains, 'ghosts are those who are unburied or improperly buried. Precisely the same applies to the acousmêtre, when we speak of a yet-unseen voice, one that can neither enter the image to attach itself to a visible body, nor occupy the removed position of the image presenter.'[39] The mother's voice – 'the dead in his head' (363), as Voice puts it in *Eh Joe* – is finally attached to a body in the final scene; it speaks through the son, yet Bates' lips do not move. It is an effect which Beckett further extends years later in *Rockaby*, which also bears comparison with *Psycho*. In this late play, written in 1980 and first performed in 1981, a woman, W, '*prematurely old*' (433), rocks on a chair while a recorded voice narrates the story of an old woman near her death in a series of rhythmically repetitive phrases. The separation between the body in the rocking chair and the recorded voice ambiguates the stage image; the voice, which speaks in the third person – 'time she stopped' (435) – seems to describe both the figure's mother and the figure on stage in 'the old rocker […] where mother rocked' (440), dressed in her 'best black' (440). Mother and daughter have mysteriously fused, or, if we extend the comparison with *Psycho* to *Rockaby*,

[36] Francois Truffaut, *Hitchcock* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1984), 111.
[37] Ibid., 126.
[38] Kalb, *Beckett in Performance*, 107.
[39] Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, 150.

the mother's voice has taken possession of the daughter, so that she has become, as W puts it, 'her own other' (441). The woman in the rocking chair, with her 'white expressionless face' which is 'swaying in and out of light' (433), recalls the scene in *Psycho* when the corpse of Norman Bates' mother is discovered in a rocking chair by Marion Crane's sister, Lila. As she raises her hand in horror, Lila Crane hits the overhanging light bulb, which sways to and fro, so the image we see of the mother in the chair is of the skull of a face, lit by the swinging light bulb, now lit, now in shadow, before Bates enters the room, dressed, as is the figure in *Rockaby*, in a 'lacy high-necked evening gown' (433).

Psycho was the first film Hitchcock made after spending several years working in television. One aspect of the experiment in *Psycho*, as Hitchcock himself made clear in his interview with Truffaut, was the combination of cinematic with televisual technique:

> The picture cost eight hundred thousand dollars. It was an experiment in this sense: could I make a feature film under the same conditions as a television show? I used a complete television unit to shoot it very quickly. The only place where I digressed was when I slowed down the murder scene. The cleaning up scene, and the other scenes that indicated anything that required time. All of the rest was handled in the same way that they do it in television.[40]

Before *Psycho*, Hitchcock directed seventeen half-hour episodes of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, broadcast on CBS from 1955 to 1960.[41] The fast production schedules in television, the smaller budgets, limited camera set-ups and studio-based locations suggest a complex relation with his cinematic work, in which the boundaries between cinema and TV aesthetics become less pronounced. The experiment in *Eh Joe*, made at a time when Beckett was himself becoming an auteur, taking charge of the direction of his work in theatre and television, also cross-breeds, as I have argued, cinematic techniques with the working methods of television.

In the late fifties and early sixties, when the nouvelle vague re-invented him as an auteur director, Hitchcock entered into the modernist landscape. The combination of classical storytelling with experimental technique in *Psycho* partly represents Hitchcock's response to the nouvelle vague's re-appraisal of him. The killing of the lead character midway through the film was unprecedented in a Hollywood film, though a comparable event occurs in Antonioni's *L'Avventura* (1960), made in the same year, and one of the first of the new wave of sixties

[40] Truffaut, *Hitchcock*, 353.

[41] See Thomas M. Leitch, 'The Outer Circle: Hitchcock on Television', in Richard Allen and S. Ishi Gonzales, eds, *Alfred Hitchcock: Centenary Essays* (London: British Film Institute, 1999).

European art cinema. In both films, the central female character suddenly disappears midway through the film and is never seen again. The point of view in both films then shifts unexpectedly to a character established thus far as merely secondary; in *Psycho*, this technique, already experimental for a film told in the classical narrative system, is further complicated by the psychic split between Norman Bates and the ghost of his mother. Straightforward psychological causality as primary motive force is negated in a manner which is closer to the new European art film than it is to classical Hollywood narration, as is the dependence on dialogue as a means to reveal character: many of the film's most iconic moments depict extended dialogue-free scenes overlayed either with an acousmatic voice, or extra-diegetic music, as in the famous shower sequence. Speech is uncoupled from image in a manner which foreshadows the more sustained experiments of the nouvelle vague's division of cinema into its constituent audiovisual elements.

Godard continues to develop this technique, for instance, in *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (1967), where his own voiceover narration on the politics and economics of contemporary Paris rarely coincides, in a straightforward illustrative manner, with the images of Juliette Janson, a bourgeois housewife who slides into prostitution to support her family. As Kovács points out, the second wave modernist film 'tended to separate the information conveyed by the soundtrack from that conveyed by the images. Increasingly, soundtracks became an independent channel of information rather than a subordinate explanatory or accompanying element.'[42] This tendency to unbind the mutual co-expressiveness of sound and image is a key aspect of the overlap and co-existence of first and second wave modernism. Eisenstein and Pudovkin desired the 'pronounced non-coincidence' of sound from image: 'This method of attack only will produce the requisite sensation, which will lead in course of time to the creation of a new "orchestral counterpoint" of sight-images and sound-images.'[43] Eisenstein's advocation of contrapuntal sound derived from his thinking about the possibilities of the 'inner film monologue',[44] as distinct from the 'merely naturalistic passive sound recording' of conventional synchronized dialogue; for Eisenstein, the intermedial modernism in Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* offered blueprints for the future possibilities of the polyphonic interior monologue in a cinema 'capable of reconstructing all phases and all specifics

[42] Kovács, *Screening Modernism,* 298.

[43] Eisenstein, W.I. Pudovkin and G.V. Alexandroff, 'The Sound Film: A Statement from U.S.S.R.', *Close Up*, 3.4 (1928), repr. *Close Up*, 84.

[44] Eisenstein, 'A Course in Treatment', *Film Form,* 104.

of the course of thought'.[45] His plans to film Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* in the early thirties with Paramount studios show forth a radical conception of asynchronous 'polyphonic sounds' heard over a 'black screen and interspersed with accelerated images over silence':[46] Hollywood's rapid standardization of the technology and production methods of synchronized sound would simply not allow such an innovative film technique to challenge its dominant model. It was not until the late fifties that Eisenstein's view was realized, as filmmakers such as Resnais, Bresson, Duras and Godard sought to withhold and deny the spectatorial identification of traditional, naturalistic, synchronized sound-image relations. These films were made during a revival of the aesthetics of the silent film, and the re-discovery of Eisenstein's pronouncements on contrapuntal sound and the power of the asynchronous silent image.

Eisenstein's vision of asynchronicity, forged in his encounter with Joyce, becomes a guiding principle during the rediscovery of the modernist project in the cinema of the sixties and seventies. *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*, like *Eh Joe*, combines asynchronous image and sound, or tracking shots with interior voiceovers delivered in a flat, inexpressive tone, which serve to attenuate the melodramatic content of the spoken lines. In the opening shot, the camera tracks through the palace, towards the salon, while an interior monologue describes the events of last year, in phrases which repeat and modify. Inside the salon, we see the actors on stage frozen by the camera's gaze. The monologue, a disembodied voice in search of incarnation, merges with the dialogue of the players, who momentarily lip-synch phrases spoken by the voiceover; a doubling effect occurs, ambiguating the voice, which could belong to one of the actors on stage, or the lover, who is in the audience watching the play. The voice's memory of last year intermingles, in the opening monologue, with a memory of an earlier production of the same play, also from last year; possibly the lover speaking about the affair last year at Marienbad, or the voice of the actor on stage, speaking about performing the same role in the same play a year later. This asynchronicity between body and voice allows the film to express, in equal measure, the fantasy of the actor, or of the spectator watching the play in the audience within the film. In this respect, the serial repetitions of phrase also resemble a spectator hearing, and remembering the same lines of the play first seen a year ago, or the repetitions of an actor learning or rehearsing his lines, much like in *Play*.

[45] Ibid., 103, 105.
[46] Ibid.

The asynchronous voice in *Marienbad* develops the innovations of Resnais' previous film, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, where 'the first radical isolation of text and image can be found'. This innovation consisted of 'subordinating the chronology of the plot to a free association of a voice-over narrator's text'. As Rohmer put it, 'There were a lot of modem filmmakers during the silent era: Eisenstein, the expressionists, and Dreyer too […] *Hiroshima* is the first modern film of the sound cinema.'[47] The film's thematized separation of text and image, as in *Marienbad,* is an aspect of its co-authorship: Resnais directed the script by Marguerite Duras, a writer Beckett admired, finding her play, *Le Square,* which he heard on radio in 1957, an 'infinitely affecting text'. He wrote to Schneider that a double bill production of *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Le Square* 'would please me much'.[48] Beckett also saw *Hiroshima Mon Amour* on its release, and wrote: 'I have met Resnais, the most gifted of the lot [the French New Wave] probably though his Hiroshima was not satisfactory. Nuit et Brouillard was very fine.'[49]

In Resnais' and Duras' film, a French actress, while playing a role in a documentary about the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima in 1945, has an affair with a Japanese architect. She tells him the story of her previous love affair with an enemy German soldier in her home town, Nevers; the soldier is shot dead, and she spends the next two years in a state of trauma, reliving the memory of her dying lover. The ghost of his memory haunts both her present affair, and the film itself. The interior monologue, as written by Duras, is juxtaposed with Resnais' images, which constantly intercut between the present reality of post-nuclear Hiroshima, the documentary reconstruction of the bombing and its after-effects, and the past event at Nevers. Personal and historical trauma merge in an amalgam of segmented recollection. The destruction of the city stands in for and reflects on the trauma of lost love; the voiceover both narrates the story from the past over images of Hiroshima, and the developing story in the present heard over images of Nevers. The film's conception as voiceover prior to image generates an effect whereby the actress' interior monologue, consistently heard throughout the film, allows her to become, like Keaton, Joe and Krapp, both the narrator of the story and its central focus.

Hiroshima was released a few months after the premiere of *Krapp's Last Tape*. Despite obvious differences, both works share certain principal features of technique, especially as regards the severance of voice and image, and of speech and gesture. Beckett, like Duras, also initially wrote *Krapp* as a monologue, adding

[47] Kovács, *Screening Modernism,* 293.
[48] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 6 September 1959, Harmon, *No Author Better Served*, 56.
[49] Beckett to John Manning, 15 October 1959, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 3, 246.

the visual sequences later in the play's development. The successive early drafts reveal that Krapp grew out of an abandoned prose piece. As Michael Robinson notes, 'it is almost certain that Beckett abandoned the novel *From an Abandoned Work* in favour of the play, retaining its best features'.[50] In the first draft, no mention is made of his clownish appearance, '*trousers too short for him*', or the routines with the keys and bananas.[51] Gontarski argues that these mime routines reinforce the essential distance between the self-regarding Krapp on tape, and the ridiculous clown-like figure we observe on stage. These comic routines, foregrounding the mechanical against the expressive gesture, also keep in check the element of pathos. They formalize the idea that Krapp is more a victim than a creature of habit. The self-repetition in his ritual of self-communing, in particular when he eats the banana, has encrusted into a Bergsonian cliché from silent cinema: the routine replays a scene in an early Chaplin film, *By the Sea* (1915). Chaplin enters from the right side of the frame, pacing, like Krapp, '*not more than four or five paces … meditatively eating banana*' (216); he stops in the centre of the frame, drops and then treads on skin, and slips. The allusion crystallizes the sense of Krapp as a reified subject, his movement mechanized through habit, drained of spontaneity, inadvertently imitating a tired old gag. Ruby Cohn contends that the 'banana business' on film is 'less funny than on stage'.[52] I would say that the routine is effective precisely because it is 'less funny', expressing how stale and false Krapp has become as he imitates a joke long since deceased. Divided voice and image, or speech and gesture, creates in *Krapp*, as it does in *Hiroshima*, an effect of split consciousness which allows the protagonist to watch and listen to themselves, or versions of themselves, as though they were someone else.

Beckett further develops this effect of self-spectatorship in the TV version of the German *Krapp's Last Tape*, which coincided with his own production at the Schiller-Theater, Berlin, in October 1969, and which was his next work for the screen after *Eh Joe*. While directing Martin Held as Krapp, Westdeutscher Rundfunk approached Beckett during rehearsals with a request to film his production of *Das Letzte Band* for TV. Beckett agreed and wrote a three-page typescript entitled 'Suggestions for TV Krapp' which re-envisioned the play for the screen. The production opens at the Schiller-Theater on 5 October; it is filmed between the 6th and 9th and broadcast on the 28th. The TV *Krapp* incorporates the already extensive changes, documented in his Berlin Production Notebook, which Beckett made to the original playscript. As noted by Clas Zilliacus,

[50] Michael Robinson, *The Long Sonata of the Dead* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1969), 212.
[51] Gontarski, *Intent of Undoing,* 55.
[52] Ruby Cohn, *Just Play: Beckett's Theater* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 213.

who published the TV script, 'the text to which Beckett's suggestions are most profitably applied is that of his own Berlin Regiebuch'.[53] That he had already written the TV script a year prior to the Berlin version suggests a more complex reciprocal exchange between Beckett as theatre director and filmmaker.

Beckett had previously shown the TV script in February 1969 to Alan Schneider, who was anxious to film it, as the correspondence between them reveals. The project is finally shot in 1971, with Schneider directing Jack MacGowran for PBS, WNET-TV. This version, overlooked by the commercial networks, was never broadcast, and the tape was thought lost until it resurfaced around 1988. BBC2 broadcast another version on 29 November 1972, directed by Donald McWhinnie and starring Patrick McGee, the actor for whom Beckett originally wrote the play. The direction is entirely McWhinnie's. Beckett did not send him the TV directions,[54] and despite McGee's definitive vocal performance, it suffers from an arbitrary style of camera placement contrary to Beckett's TV script. Schneider's version, although a flawed realization of his intent, was nevertheless filmed with Beckett's directions, both for camera and for the Schiller-Theater, in mind.

In the TV script, and Schneider's version, two cameras – A which is objective, covering the 'total situation', and B, which simulates subjective embodiment, 'investigates, from all angles and often from above, detail of table situation, hands face, machine ledger boxes and tapes' – film Krapp in two contrasting styles. While Camera A simulates theatrical perception, B serves as a reactive entity. It 'listens and its activity is affected by words spoken', and it is a 'savage eye'. The camera stops to listen, or as Beckett puts it, is 'inhibited at moments of most avid listening and fully active at those of least. Its accurate use depends therefore on assessment of Krapp's levels of intentness, or listening values.'[55] It reacts, as an extension of Krapp's own perceptual apparatus, according to the level of his interest in the voice on tape: the camera's intent imitates the actor's principle 'always [to] reassume listening position before turning on recorder'.[56] Just as the actor conveys, through look and gesture, as he moves closer to the machine, those moments which matter most to him, so should the camera move closer to Krapp.

For the Schiller production, Beckett toned down the clownishness of Krapp's clothing, noting to himself, 'beware of excess stylisation!'[57] while elaborating

[53] 'Suggestions for TV *Krapp*', Zilliacus, *Beckett and Broadcasting*, 204.
[54] Donald McMillan and Martha Fehsenfeld, *Beckett in the Theatre* (London: John Calder, 1988), 256.
[55] 'Suggestions for TV *Krapp*', Zilliacus, *Beckett and Broadcasting*, 204.
[56] McMillan and Fehesenfeld, *Beckett in the Theatre*, 112.
[57] Samuel Beckett, *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett, vol. 3: Krapp's Last Tape*, ed. James Knowlson (London: Faber & Faber, 1992), 81.

the routine of the banana gag. As a patterned movement, and as allusion to Chaplinesque slapstick routine, it is unavoidably stylized, yet it also displays Krapp's stiffened decrepitude. Beckett was cautious to avoid an 'excess' of the stylized body, in order not to obscure the natural, mimetic body, the image of a tired, infirm old man at the end of his life. The repetition of patterned gestures is more pronounced in Beckett's production. For instance, Krapp should raise and lower his head according to an elaborate series of cues – 'the strange effect of his finger hovering over the text as he reads [the ledger is] repeated exactly with the dictionary'[58] – and the note for Martin Held to 'assist himself with his hands' when he rises from the table is repeated exactly whenever he moves around the table. These gestures confer a formal quality on Krapp's movement, but they also emphasize his decaying natural body: the way he needs his hands to help him up and around stresses his infirmity.

Schneider's use of close-ups to cue the switch to Camera B and amplify the significance of tiny underplayed gestures fulfils Beckett's instruction that Camera B move in to 'the detail of table situation, hands, face, machine, ledger, boxes and tapes'.[59] Krapp's hands, observed in detail, play a more significant role on screen than they do on stage. Beckett intended the hand gestures in the Schiller production to be small-scale but revealing: 'as he listens, left hand on switch of the tape-recorder, right hand clearly visible on the table with the possibility of eventual slight movements (e.g. At the onset of his impatience)'.[60] While he listens to the tapes, the present tense Krapp hardly speaks, so an audience would look to his hands for a reaction.

The camera's 'fierce investigation' magnifies these 'slight movements', symptomatic gestures – Beckett describes them under the chapter heading 'Psychological' – signalling heightened attention or its lack. In addition to these listening gestures, a series of close-ups in which Krapp inspects the light on the tape machine, spools and then manually rewinds and forwards the tape, his hands acting with an independent vigour lacking in the rest of him, reinforce the emphasis of a key gestural motif: the affective symbiosis of his hands with the machine. Beckett notes in the Schiller Notebook, 'tape relationship both fundamental and almost impossible to convey through the acting without descending to the level of the sentimental. Just a few looks and some movement of his hands, his left hand for tenderness (as he switches on for example, and both hands to express irritation (way of switching off or drumming with his fingers).'

[58] Ibid.
[59] 'Suggestions for TV *Krapp*', Zilliacus, *Beckett and Broadcasting*, 204.
[60] Beckett, *Theatrical Notebooks: Krapp's Last Tape*, 88.

The relationship established with the tape machine, the 'object of animisation', is twofold. In the section of the Notebook marked 'General', Beckett remarks on 'the tendency of the solitary to have an emotional rapport with objects – here in particular with the tape recorder'.[61] The machine is an old and reliable friend, Krapp's only company, and the 'movement of his hands', slight reproaches or caresses, animate this tendency. A present tense companion in itself, the machine also calls forth the human companionships of Krapp's past. His hand gestures are simultaneously intended for the machine itself, coaxing or fondling it according to the news it bears, but also for the various women for whom the machine is a substitute. This dual function of the tape machine receives a significant added emphasis in the Schneider film and the Schiller production, particularly during the account of the girl in the punt and Krapp's dying mother, which brings to the surface the Proustian aspect of his gestures of recall, and further suggests a comparison with *Hiroshima Mon Amour*.

Krapp's gestures with the machine occur in two tenses, each echoing the other. The gesture in the present summons the bodily situation of the past. As Adam Piette suggests in his work on the complex acoustical structures of textual memory systems, 'internal recalls, alerting devices and habit forming repetitions' as a phenomenon of the ear are potentially analogous, in Beckett's drama, to the patterns of the body, which is 'at once a manifestation of the accent and rhythm of the voice of memory, and the creator of it'.[62] The last words Krapp speaks, 'lie down across her', are followed by the stage direction '*he suddenly bends over the machine*' (223). The machine stands in for the girl in the punt as Krapp rhymes with or imitates his former self lying across her. Krapp's one-sided view that selfhood resides exclusively in the voice, in the disembodied tape recording, is contradicted by summoning the phenomenological experience of the body by a gesture. In the 'Circe' chapter of Joyce's *Ulysses*, which often revives sentences from earlier chapters, this form of body recall – a replicated movement cutting from the present to the past, memories of past sensation triggered by a present tense gesture in close-up – is a recurrent phenomenon. Bloom is reminded of his 'love's young dream' to be a 'shoefitter in Mansfield's' and 'the darling joys of sweet buttonhooking', when '*stifflegged, aging,* [he] *bends over* [Bella's] *hoof and with gentle fingers draws out and in her laces*'.[63] The miming of a present tense gesture with an identical gesture from the past, summoning an entire situation, also closely resembles the operations of involuntary memory in Proust:

[61] Ibid., 67, 79.
[62] Adam Piette, *Remembering and the Sound of Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 226.
[63] James Joyce, *Ulysses*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler (New York: Garland, 1984), 432: 2830–2833.

> The love of Albertine had disappeared from my memory. But it seems that there exists too an involuntary memory of the limbs, a pale and sterile imitation of the other but longer-lived, just as there are animals or vegetables without intelligence which are longer-lived than man. Our legs and our arms are full of torpid memories. And once, when I had said good-night to Gilberte rather early, I woke up in the middle of the night in my room at Tansonville and, still half-asleep, called out 'Albertine!' It was not that I had thought of her or dreamt of her, nor that I was confusing her with Gilberte, but a memory in my arm, opening like a flower, had made me fumble behind my back for the bell, as though I had been in my bedroom in Paris. And not finding it, I had called out: 'Albertine!', thinking that my dead mistress was lying by my side, as she had often done in the evening, and that we were both dropping off to sleep, and reckoning, as I woke up, that because of the time it would take Françoise to reach my room, Albertine might without imprudence pull the bell which I could not find.[64]

The gesture summons the past as though independent of a unified body and the narrator's conscious sensation of time and place. Moments lived through with Albertine often re-surface in small acts forgotten by the mind but contained in the body. The memory in his arm prompts him to imitate the gesture with the bell he once used to make with Albertine by his side. It is this 'longer-lived' memory, outlasting the purely reflective memory of Albertine, that causes the narrator's suffering, both after she dies, and while she is alive but absent: 'I was suffering from a love that no longer existed. Thus does an amputee, in certain kinds of weather, feel pain in the limb he has lost.'[65] A phantom limb, according to Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception*, is both the 'presence of part of the representation of the body which should not be given, since the corresponding limb is not there', and a 'memory' of the absent limb; physiological and psychic elements combine in 'a refusal of the deficiency and retention of the practical field before the mutilation'.[66] As Ulrika Maude points out, 'the common denominator' between Beckett and Merleau-Ponty is 'the concept of the phantom limb': 'The phantom limb, therefore, functions as an involuntary memory of kinds, one that cannot be consciously willed away, but rather forms part of the incarnate subject's identity, while yet being lost on an objective, intentional level.'[67] The phantom limb is more than a recollection; it is a 'quasi-present' which the subject

[64] Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, trans. C.K.Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, rev. D.J. Enright, 6 vols (London: Vintage, 1992), VI, *Time Regained*, 9.

[65] Ibid., V, *The Fugitive,* 679.

[66] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1962), 83.

[67] Ulrika Maude, *Beckett, Technology and the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 19.

can still feel folded over his chest, or behind his back. It haunts the present body without being absorbed into it. Merleau-Ponty compares the phenomenon to repressed experience, 'a former present which cannot decide to recede into the past'.[68] For Proust, it is like regret for lost love.

In the Schiller Notebook, Beckett suggests this sense of gesture recall in a note for the earlier extended narration of the scene on the lake: 'in the same way as he listens to the boat [story] his left hand should become (how?) "Meine Hand auf ihr" "my hand on her."'[69] Krapp is frozen in the act of intent listening, but his left hand, haunted by a moment on tape – 'I lay down across her with my face in her breasts and my hand on her' (221) – should 'become' or imitate the hand belonging to the younger Krapp. The misgiving expressed in '(how?)' implies a directorial uncertainty, on Beckett's part, as to how to register the enactment of gesture memory on stage. Again, Schneider's version achieves an unexpectedly heightened realization, cross-breeding Beckett's suggestions for Krapp's hand with Camera B's 'fierce investigation of machine, hands, face, tapes'.[70] During the passage which begins, 'I asked her to look at me' (221), a series of camera moves and gestures enact the mime of gesture recall: 'and after a few moments – [*Pause.*] – after a few moments she did, but the eyes just slits' – Camera B slowly moves into a tight close-up of Krapp's listening face – 'because of the glare. I bent over her to get them in the shadow and they opened. [*Pause. Low.*]' – B moves in to a tighter close-up of Krapp's eyes which close on 'Let me in' and Krapp lies across the machine – 'I lay down across her with my face in her breasts and my hand on her' – his left hand, foregrounded in medium close-up, moves gently up and down the machine, and from side to side. The motif of the close-up and the reminiscing left hand is employed to suggest the independent force of the gesture, possessed with a ghost-like agency, as corporeal memory restores, as Proust puts it, describing the memory of Albertine, accessed through an isolated gesture, the girl's 'initial novelty, her mystery, even her setting […] installing alone in us the self that originally lived them'.[71] The notion of Camera B as a version of Krapp scrutinizing himself from a distance, while his hand loses itself in a former experience, parallels equivalent moments of self-spectatorship in Proust, when the narrator looks on his past self as though it belonged to another person. At the end of *Guermantes Way*, with Albertine's 'vice' at last confirmed beyond doubt, the narrator perceives himself as though from a few yards away: 'I heard myself weeping.'[72] The two cameras divide

[68] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* 85.
[69] Beckett, *Theatrical Notebooks: Krapp's Last Tape*, 88.
[70] 'Suggestions for TV *Krapp*', Zilliacus, *Beckett and Broadcasting*, 204.
[71] Proust, V, *The Captive,* 214.
[72] Proust, III, *Guermantes Way,* 612.

Krapp's self-spectatorship, like Proust's, between the first person phenomenon of lived-through experience and the simultaneous 'abstraction of that existence, which lives on a former experience', of reflection from a distance which converts that experience into 'a cluster of third personal experiences'.[73]

The Proustian method of gestural recall is a shared source both for Beckett and for Resnais. In *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, the actress carries the memory of her German lover in her limbs, as suggested in the opening sequence where disembodied voices are accompanied by close-ups of two interlinked, clasping bodies in extreme close-up. The bodies double up as flashbacks to the actress and her German lover, and as images from the present of the actress and her Japanese lover: the memory of her German lover is contained in her body, and her body, remembering his touch, both reluctantly keeps him alive, and struggles to forget him by substituting him for the Japanese man. As Emma Wilson observes, the film 'merges two senses of the term flashback. Flashback is used in film criticism to denote a sequence in a previous time or era […] In psychoanalytic discourse, by contrast, a flashback is an unwilled returning hallucination or memory which takes possession of the victim of trauma'.[74] This view is clearly illustrated in the instance when the actress observes her Japanese lover's hand twitching as he lies asleep; from the close-up of his hand, the image cuts to an identical gesture, a close-up of the German lover's hand as he lies dying in the street in Nevers. The Japanese man's gesture summons the memory of the dead German soldier, bringing the past instantaneously into the present. The sequence moves from a point of view shot of her new lover's hand, to a flash insert of the German's hand, from the same close-up point of view; the camera then tilts up sharply and we see her lying over him, in a hybrid first person–third person shot. Only she had access to the memory of his final, minute gesture, and yet we see her, as the camera moves away from the hand, holding her dying lover in a two shot, an object in the field of vision rather than its point of origin. The scene then cuts back to her observing from a distance her Japanese lover in bed; by presenting both time zones in a present tense, through composite first and third person shots, the actress becomes both participant and spectator of her own narrative, a dislocated subject seeing herself from a distance as though she were someone else.

Schneider defines a similar operation of Proustian gesture recall during Krapp's attempt to remember his mother's last days. On first reading the ledger, he has trouble remembering the black ball he gave to the dog during the death

[73] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 83, 198.
[74] Emma Wilson, *Alain Resnais* (Manchester: Manchester University, 2006), 52.

of his mother: 'Mother at rest at last … Hm…. The black ball … [*Raises his head, stares blankly front. Puzzled.*] Black ball?…' (217). The memory eludes him, the text of the ledger alone provides insufficient access, until he arrives at the moment on tape which narrates the memory of the ball in his hand: 'and the dog yelping and pawing at me. [*Pause.*] Moments. Her moments. My moments. [*Pause.*] The dog's moments' – Camera A observes his right hand slowly turn onto its back – 'In the end I held it out to him and he took it in his mouth, gently, gently. A small, old, black, hard, solid rubber ball' – cut to Camera B, a close-up of the disembodied right hand fills the frame, his fingers slowly curling inwards, a mime of clutching the ball – 'I shall feel it, in my hand, until my dying day' – his fingers continue curling until, finding nothing there, they clench into a fist. The memory, remaining immured in the ledger, is later released by his hand in a gesture which imitates the moment he held the ball by the weir outside his mother's room.

The gesture in amplified close-up brings the death of his mother to him in all its fullness, and again resembles a similar moment in Proust. Suffering from cardiac fatigue, the narrator bends down 'slowly and cautiously to take off my boots, trying to master my pain'. His chest swollen, shaken with sobs, he perceives 'the tender, preoccupied, disappointed face' of his dead grandmother, in the moment when she too had bent down 'in her dressing-gown to unfasten [his] boots'.[75] Beckett himself describes this moment in his 1931 monograph on Proust: through 'the mysterious action of involuntary memory', triggered by the act of stooping down, 'he learns that she is dead […] But he has not merely extracted from this gesture the lost reality of his grandmother: he has recovered the lost reality of himself, the reality of his lost self'.[76] The gesture of stooping down both restores a self that 'had not existed since that evening long ago […] in Balbec',[77] and also 'the living reality' of his grandmother; yet the moment is 'poisoned', as Beckett puts it, by a 'cruel anachronism: his grandmother is dead'.[78] The curling hand in Schneider's film, which restores the reality both of Krapp's former self and his dying mother, further enhanced by the disembodied close-up – as Deleuze notes of the close-up in general, it 'tears the image away from spatio-temporal co-ordinates'[79] – brings the moment into relation with the

[75] Proust, IV, *Sodom and Gomorrah,* 180, 182.
[76] Beckett, *Proust* (London: John Calder, [1931] 1987), 41.
[77] Proust, IV, *Sodom and Gomorrah*, 181.
[78] Beckett, *Proust,* 41.
[79] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Athlone Press, 1983), 95.

Proustian resurrection. Krapp is 'poisoned' by the 'cruel anachronism' between the moment in the past and the gesture in the present which retrieves it.

Resnais' quick flashcuts, signalling the sudden re-surfacing of a forgotten or repressed past, rapidly achieved an influence over editing techniques both in Europe and also in Hollywood, in films such as Sidney Lumet's *The Pawnbroker* (1964), shot by Boris Kaufman a year before *Film,* and edited by Ralph Rosenbaum, a protégé of Sidney Meyers. Beckett saw a preview of *The Pawnbroker* while he was in New York working on *Film*.[80] The film tells the story of a holocaust survivor who loses his wife and children in a Nazi concentration camp; now living in New York with his girlfriend, his experience in the camp re-surfaces in a series of split-second traumatic flashbacks, often lasting no more than four frames. According to Rosenbaum, *Hiroshima Mon Amour* was 'a direct influence on *The Pawnbroker* in part because Resnais broke with the established pattern of showing flashbacks'.[81] But in *Krapp,* the flashback is entirely verbal; it never materializes as a visible memory: Beckett's method enfolds the spatial and mimetic aspects of the cinematic flashback into the textual diegesis. Yet, as James Knowlson suggests, 'There is a strong visual quality to the recordings […] that may well owe something to Beckett's interest in cinema and the thinking that lay behind montage'.[82] Indeed, Beckett described the material on the tapes, in the notes for his 1977 English language production in Berlin, as 'Tape Montage'. The established pattern of the flashback had long been a structuring device in film noir from the early forties to the late fifties, as for instance, in Billy Wilder's *Double Indemnity* (1944), starring Barbara Stanwyck and Fred MacMurray. Beckett had followed Stanwyck's career with interest and admiration, writing in 1950: 'Naturally we made straight for the cinema yesterday evening, Les Chafnes du destin [*No Man of Her Own* (1950], with Barbara Stanwyck. An affair of impersonation following a railway accident. I have never seen her so good, a few looks that showed extraordinary pathos.'[83] Like *Krapp's Last Tape, Double Indemnity* begins with a man, just before his death, who narrates a past romance by speaking into a microphone which records his voice. His narration, as with Krapp's, proceeds as a form of self-authorship, selecting material, editing

[80] James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), 524.

[81] Ralph Rosenblum, *When the Shooting Stops…. The Cutting Begins: An Editor's Story* (New York: Viking Press, 1979), 142.

[82] James Knowlson, *Images of Beckett* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 120.

[83] Beckett to George Duthuit, 1 August 1951, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, vol. 2: 1941–1956*, eds, George Craig, Martha Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 274.

highlights, as he revisits the scene of his crime; the opening recording on tape initiates the flashback, narrated in voiceover, of scenes from his past.

Krapp's return to the past, which remains textual and absent from view, more closely resembles a famous scene in Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* (1966), where an extended narration remains unexpectedly anchored in verbal description. *Persona,* a film which situates itself in the contemporary modernist landscape, refining the mise-en-scène and editing techniques pioneered by Godard, Resnais and others, tells the story of two women, an actress Elizabeth, struck dumb after suffering a mental collapse, and Alma, the nurse who cares for her. During the film, there is a gradual and mysterious exchange of identities between them; Alma assumes the problems and crises of her patient, while Elizabeth gains in strength, eventually regaining the power of speech. In the extended flashback sequence, Alma narrates a sexual encounter she once had on a beach; the entire scene is played out, unconventionally, through Alma's verbal narration, intercutting close-ups of her speaking and Elizabeth intently listening. Godard alludes to this scene in the opening of *Weekend* (1967), where the female character also narrates a sexual encounter at length to her boyfriend.

By refusing the visual flashback, opting to tell rather than show, Godard and Bergman foreground the event in the present, and the distance between the present and the (imaginary, virtual) past; similarly, the power of equivalent scenes in *Krapp* resides precisely in the ironic simultaneity of the aged Krapp and the ghost-like return of his past self as summoned through the tape montage. The intensely visual quality of the recordings resurrects a phantom double, indistinct and absent from view, but present nevertheless: the TV *Krapp* amplifies this ghost-like presence of the alter ego on tape by duplicating the structure of Krapp's hearing and vision. Camera B, as Schneider understood it, also serves as an extension of Krapp's perceiving body: 'subjective as inner listening perceiving self'.[84] When Krapp strains to listen, cupped hand on ear, Camera B moves in for a close-up and freezes, doubly amplifying the listening gesture. The act of perception and the perceived object coincide in the central figure. Once again there is a return to *Film* and *Eh Joe,* spectatorial externality against the introceptive, embodied focal point which 'visibly duplicates the act of viewing from within'[85] and stands in for the protagonist's alter ego. Krapp listens, grotesquely rigid, to a voice coming from a body no longer his own, as it in turn

[84] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 12 May 1971, Harmon, *No Author Better Served*, 255.

[85] Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 135.

watches him. This style of self-spectatorship, as we watch and listen through the eyes of an embodied mechanical spectator, its hand on its ear, moving nearer to its object, just as Krapp moves nearer to the tape machine, is radically different from the spectatorial effect in the theatre, where the audience would always remain external to the scene before them. As he watches the versions of himself, in the internal flashback conjured by the tape montage, he in turn is watched by his own ghostly double.

Beckett's notes towards an unfinished film project, dated November 1972, further elaborate Beckett's thinking about the reciprocity between embodied self-spectatorship, the presence of the camera and the cinematic flashback in relation to *Krapp.* These notes are found in the 'Fragments prose debut 68' notebook in the Beckett Archive at the University of Reading. Titled 'Film Video-Cassette projet', four pages of notes, with accompanying diagrams, describe two connected films, *Film I* and *Film II*. The films echo, as Mark Nixon points out, the solitary preparations of Krapp and Joe,[86] and visualize the scenario which is exclusively verbal and acoustic in *Krapp,* replacing the audio tapes with filmed images. A letter to Jack McGowran explicitly connects the film notes, and Beckett's thinking prior to *Ghost Trio*, with the TV *Krapp*: 'the old idea of a man waiting in a room seen first at normal remove then investigated in detail'.[87] Both films are set in the same room, which contains a door, window, two chairs and a television set with video recorder. In *Film I*, a seated female figure, F1, waits for someone who does not arrive; a series of interventions, including a knock on the door and the window, raise hopes of the arrival. *Film I* ends with a close-up of F1; her face is smiling as she turns to the stairs, again suggesting the possibility of an arrival, again in vain. *Film II* begins with the same figure, named F2, in the same room. She is older than F1 and dressed for winter, whereas F1 was dressed for summer. F2 proceeds to lock the door, pull the blinds, turn on the television set and insert a video cassette. She sits down to watch the video, which is a copy of *Film I.* F2 watches the younger version of herself, and pauses the video on the final close-up of F1. Beckett then describes a series of shot-reverse-shots between the close-up of F1 in the video and the close-up of F2 watching her, followed by a series of 'confrontations' between F1 and F2 which suggest that F1 can somehow see F2 'out of the tape'.[88] The notes end with the suggestion that a third figure, F3, watches F2 as she watches F1, with the three close-ups cut together. This

[86] Mark Nixon, 'Samuel Beckett: Video Artist', in eds Peter Fifield and Daniel Addyman *Samuel Beckett: Debts and Legacies: New Critical Essays* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 177–190; 180.

[87] Ibid., 180.

[88] Summary of MS 2938, 'Film Video Project', Beckett International Foundation: Reading University Library.

self-perception in visual form, a hybrid of the methods of *Film*, *Eh Joe* and the conception of a *Krapp* for the screen, which Schneider's version comes closest to realizing, is an aspect of the ongoing reciprocal influence between his work for stage and screen.

The embodied intentionality of the camera in the TV *Krapp* also coincides with a crucial element in the Schiller-Theater production, entirely absent in the original script: Krapp's paradoxical awareness of a presence other than his own, and of the series of gestures which were added to this effect. While preparing Martin Held for the part, Beckett explained: 'Old Nick's there. Death is standing behind him and unconsciously he's looking for it.'[89] Beckett directed Held on several occasions to freeze and then glance over his shoulder, as though aware of someone else on stage with him. These gestures, nowhere present in the original script, are documented in the Berlin Notebook and the revised script. In one instance, a stage direction is inserted: '*turns to the tape recorder, makes to switch on, arrests gesture, turns slowly to look over his shoulder into the darkness backstage left, long look, then slowly back front*';[90] in another, there is a note in the Regiebuch: 'look behind into shadows'.[91] Beckett referred to this look as a 'Hain', a Death figure from the eighteenth-century German writer Matthias Claudias, as though Death were waiting in the wings for Krapp. Yet in light of Beckett's earlier remark to Schneider – 'Krapp has nothing to talk to but his dying self and nothing to talk to him but his dead one'[92] – the Hain ambiguously also represents Krapp's own split self, the desiccated wreck on stage watched by the embodied dead self of his past, the version of himself he hears on tape.

During the course of Schneider's *Krapp* there is a series of looks to camera. These correspond with Beckett's own annotations in the Berlin Notebook, during moments when Krapp should be 'seized by dream' attitude. In heightened moments of attention, as the Notebook instructs, he 'raises head and stares front'.[93] The dream attitude occurs five times in the Schiller version, during the recorded account of each of the four women from his past, and twice for the lady in the punt. In correspondence with this revised effect, Camera B in Schneider's version stops moving and freezes, just prior to these five specific points. It leans

[89] 'Martin Held talks to Ronald Hayman', *The Times*, 25 April 1970, quoted in McMillan and Fehsenfeld, *Beckett in the Theatre*, 280.

[90] *Krapp's Last Tape*, Revised Text, *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett: Krapp's Last Tape*, ed. James Knowlson (London: Faber & Faber, 1992), 4.

[91] Samuel Beckett's Production Notebook for *Das Letzte Band* at the Schiller-Theater Werkstatt, Berlin, October 1969, *Theatrical Notebooks: Krapp's Last Tape*, 233.

[92] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 4 January 1960, Harmon, *No Author Better Served*, 59.

[93] Beckett, *Theatrical Notebooks: Krapp's Last Tape*, 98–99.

closer to listen, imitating Krapp bent over his machine, just before he sinks in reverie, while Krapp stares directly at the camera in a tight close-up of his face. MacGowran's look in these five instances is strongly reminiscent of Keaton's last look in *Film*: it is an inward brood suddenly replaced with a look of horror, which is also a moment of self-recognition. Schneider uses Camera B, in these instances, to his advantage. MacGowran's stare to camera combines the Hain with the dream attitude, an effect unique to the medium and which further enhances the notion of Krapp's embodied death-double.

The Hain-camera effect is an aspect of a tendency in Beckett's filmmaking which originates in the split consciousness in *Film* and *Eh Joe*. But it was also a principal feature of Beckett's first theatre production as director, and the only instance of him directing a work other than his own: Robert Pinget's one-man play *L'Hypothèse* in 1965, at the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris, a play which mixed cinema projections with live theatre. Beckett and Pinget had been close friends since meeting in 1955; Pinget translated two of Beckett's plays for radio into French, *All That Fall/Tous ce qui tombent* (1957) and *Embers/Cendres* (1959), and Beckett consistently advocated Pinget's work, calling *L'Inquisitoire* (1962) 'one of the most important novels of the last ten years'. Beckett admired Pinget's *Krapp*-like play; he made suggestions while attending initial rehearsals with Pierre Chabert in the role of Mortin, and quickly agreed to take on the role of director. According to Chabert, he and Beckett worked on *L'Hypothèse* for a 'long time' and 'very minutely'.[94] The production was revived a year later, alongside Beckett's production of *Va et vient,* on a Beckett-Pinget-Ionesco programme at the Odéon Théâtre.

In Chabert's account, the chief difficulty in staging the play was the technical problem of how to interrupt the monologue with the 'cinematographic image of the central character, Mortin, which is projected on the wall'.[95] Mortin, in a room resembling Krapp's, attempts to '*repeat a lecture by heart to an imaginary audience, though the text is there in front of him*'; he reads out the text *'as if by rote*' and '*often stops, hesitates, and refers to the text*'.[96] The lecture describes a hypothesis about an imaginary text and the author's motives for discarding it, in a scenario which parallels Mortin's own situation. During the monologue, a '*cinematic projection of Mortin's face*' (175) appears on the back wall and interrupts Mortin's lecture five times. In the first appearance, the image is '*twice*

[94] McMillan and Fehsenfeld, *Beckett in the Theatre*, 314.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Robert Pinget, *The Hypothesis*, in trans. Barbara Bray, *Plays Vol. 2: Architruc, About Mortin, The Hypothesis* (London: John Calder, 1967), 171.

life-size' (175); each time it then appears, it doubles in size. Chabert gives a detailed account of the filmed image:

> As it grows in size, the projection also remains visible longer and grows more voluble. The first appearance is for only ten seconds and the image is silent. The second projection remains longer while Mortin is at first unaware of it; it too is silent. In the third projection the face begins to move its lips but there is no audible speech. By the fourth appearance, the image murmurs words which are at first indistinct, but as this murmur grows to a crescendo and Mortin turns his attention to it, the words become clear and the image begins a monologue which is a parody, a derisory inversion of what the character has just recounted. In the fifth and final projection the voice of the image replaces that of Mortin who reads inaudibly from his manuscript. Mortin's few audible passages grow shorter as the triple image [three images of Mortin side-by-side] takes over a long section, speaking louder and louder and faster and faster.[97]

The cinema image had already been filmed before Beckett began rehearsals – according to Chabert, Beckett was 'completely satisfied with the cinematographic projection'[98] – so he occupied himself with the task of integrating the images with the live actor, re-arranging Mortin's room, moving the table to the centre, the stove downstage right and the bookcase upstage left in order to emphasize the back wall as a screen for the projected images. Beckett also made various dramaturgical adjustments to the script. When Chabert takes the manuscript from his table, he would drop a page after reciting it, leaving the stage strewn with paper, and he would throw the final page into the stove at the end. In Pinget's script, according to Chabert:

> Mortin aims a revolver at the image, and the second time it appears he shoots, whereupon the image disappears. Pinget has him calmly clean the revolver and return it to the drawer of the table. Beckett has him drop the revolver so that in the fourth appearance of the image, when it is giving Mortin its account of the tender relationship of the father and his daughter, exactly opposite to Mortin's own account of a sadistic relationship, Mortin runs across the stage and grabs the pistol. He is just ready to shoot again, but before he can fire, the image disappears.[99]

On the fifth appearance of the image, Beckett placed Chabert back at the table, with his back to the image, hands over his ears, gradually lowering his head on

[97] McMillan and Fehsenfeld, *Beckett in the Theatre*, 314.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid., 315.

the table. Finally, with the manuscript completely discarded, Mortin disrobes and Beckett asked Chabert to assume a 'broken attitude', placing him 'completely over to the left side next to the stove, so we achieved a complete decentralisation of the character, as if he too had been exhausted, like the manuscript'.[100]

The use of cinematic projections variously influenced Beckett's future productions. Beckett's idea to lower instantaneously the stage lighting when the filmed image of Mortin appears, followed by its gradual increase when the image disappears, was repeated in the lighting patterns of his production of *Godot*. As Chabert indicates, 'when I recently saw Godot directed by Beckett, I discovered the same lighting effect – the lighting drops suddenly just after Pozzo and Lucky's exit when night falls'.[101] The filmed images of Chabert echo the close-ups of varying shot lengths in the film of *Comédie* and *Eh Joe*, but also crucially anticipate the reconfigured *Krapp* in the TV and Schiller-Theater productions. As Ruby Cohn indicates, '*The Hypothesis* resembles *Krapp's Last Tape* in that a writer-protagonist reacts to another aspect of himself – Krapp to his tape and Mortin to films of his face'. The three separate areas on stage, with the table as the central point of orientation, resemble Krapp's room (although Krapp also moves to an off-stage room). Chabert had played Krapp in Paris in 1963, and would do so again, with Beckett as director, in 1975; when Beckett insisted on an 'umbilical relationship' to the table in *L'Hypothèse*, he and Chabert found a similar rapport with the table in the production of Krapp ten years later. It was after he directed Chabert as Mortin to look behind him at the filmed image of himself that he made the revisions to *Krapp*, including the Hain-effect where Martin Held looks over his shoulder, aware of a presence other than his own. In both productions, the appearance of the ghost-like double is marked by an absence performed as a real presence; in Mortin's case, the image appears to address the figure on stage, even though it is a filmed recording, and with Krapp, the Hain-camera effect embodies his phantom self, though we only see a single figure on stage. Auditory perception in the TV *Krapp* is brought into the domain of the visible, while close listening in *L'Hypothèse* is doubled by intent looking. The crisis both Mortin and Krapp experience as divided subjects, caught between the live and the recorded, or between Camera A and Camera B, is situated at the intersection of the theatrical and the cinematic.

[100] Ibid., 317.
[101] Ibid., 315.

3

‘texte théâtre film’: Auteurism, Meyerhold/ Eisenstein, Duras

Prior to his first credit as a director, Beckett had worked as an assistant on productions of his plays by, for instance, Roger Blin, George Devine and Donald McWhinnie. After his first credited production as a director, for Pinget’s *L’Hypothèse* in 1965, and the film of *Comédie*, he directed twelve of his own works for the stage: in Germany, *Endgame* (1967), *Krapp’s Last Tape* (1969 and 1977), *Happy Days* (1971), *Waiting for Godot* (1975), *That Time* and *Footfalls* (1976) and *Play* (1978); in France, *Come and Go* (1966), *Krapp’s Last Tape* (1970 and 1975) and *Not I* (1978); in England, *Footfalls* (1976) and *Happy Days* (1979) at the Royal Court Theatre. During this period, he assiduously developed a directorial style which is extensively detailed in his production notebooks and correspondences. S.E. Gontarski has argued, overlooking the impact of his first attempts at filmmaking, that the late aesthetic in Beckett’s drama from *Play* onwards is profoundly influenced by his own involvement in the practicalities of directing himself: ‘the level of technical sophistication and precision’ in the operation of the light in *Play* prompted a more direct involvement in the practicalities of stage management, and ‘it was the writing of *Play* which may have finally forced Beckett – reluctant as he was – to assume full directorial responsibility for his own works’.[1] Between its first production as *Spiel* at the Ulmer Theater, Ulm-Donau, on 14 June 1963 until middle-late 1964, various versions of the play circulated in typescript. On the cusp of becoming his own director and assuming total control over the execution of minute technical details, Beckett finds himself unable to publish a final version until he is certain those details retain an integrity of audiovisual form, continuously revising the text between its English publication and its French and English performances.

[1] S.E. Gontarski, ‘Staging Himself, Or Beckett’s Late Style on the Theatre’, *Samuel Beckett Today/ Aujourd’Hui*, 6 (1997), 87–96; 94.

Directing his own plays becomes a form of public re-reading, and the overlaps between compositional and directorial intent after *Play* are the consequence of a developing sense of spectatorial effect.

I wish to widen the scope of this view by showing how his directorial style is fundamentally altered by his work for the screen. In my view, his formative encounter with the making of *Film* and the film of *Comédie* constitutes a significant turning point. Despite his hands-on involvement with the production of *Film*, Beckett's experience of its directorial and technical mismanagement led him to assume greater control of his work, both for stage and screen. The first productions of *Play* on stage and screen mark a shift towards a dramaturgy which seeks to eliminate contingency and liveness, as though the theatrical event were a mechanical reproduction viewed through a rigorously directed frame.

This aspiration towards fixity is an aspect of Beckett's increasing dissatisfaction with the attempt by other directors to impose their vision onto his work, as demonstrated in a letter to Alan Schneider: 'I dream sometimes of all German directors of plays with perhaps one exception united in one with his back to the wall and me shooting a bullet into his balls every five minutes till he loses his taste for improving authors.'[2] Of the first Berlin production of *Endgame*, he remarked, 'everything is wrong in it';[3] during Peter Hall's first English production of *Godot,* he whispered in Alan Schneider's ear, 'It's ahl wrahng! He's doing it ahl wrahng'![4] After disputes with Andre Gregory's 1973 Manhattan Project production of *Endgame* – 'this production sounds truly revolting & damaging to the play'[5] – and many others, Beckett sought strenuously to regulate productions of his work. Contracts were drafted in several countries, as Knowlson points out, 'to state specifically that no additions, omissions or alterations should be made to the text of the play or the stage directions and that no music, special effects or other supplements shall be added without prior consent'.[6] Beckett's auteurist control over the contingency of live theatrical productions during his lifetime has extended, as Anthony Uhlmann observes, to 'the subsequent ongoing insistence of the Beckett Estate that his stage directions be closely adhered to'.[7] In theatrical work from *Play* onwards, actors are blocked to the inch, mechanical repetition

[2] James Knowlson, *Images of Beckett* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 99.
[3] Ibid., 97.
[4] Ibid., 99.
[5] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 20 February 1973, Maurice Harmon, ed., *No Author Better Served: The Correspondence of Samuel Beckett and Alan Schneider* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 304.
[6] James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), 695.
[7] Anthony Uhlmann, 'Staging Plays', in ed. Anthony Uhlmann, *Samuel Beckett in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 173.

becomes the dominant mode, altered only by slight permutations, the gaze of the audience fixed and unalterable, just as it is on the screen. The frequent disputes between the contrary intentions of theatre practitioners and the compositional intent of Beckett's stage directions is a singular phenomenon in theatre. The audience for a 1984 production of *Endgame*, directed by Joanne Akalaitis, and set in a post-holocaust New York subway, received this message from the author, as part of their programme for the evening: 'any production of Endgame which ignores my stage directions is completely unacceptable to me'.[8] Beckett's defence of his written directions reiterates an unalterable sense of the contingencies of theatre: once established by his own activity as writer-director, the performance will be cryogenically frozen for all time. This anti-theatrical tendency has continued in his absence. In 1994, Deborah Warner's production of *Footfalls* at the Garrick, in which May roamed around the stage and over the dress circle, rather than pacing up and down a confined strip, was quickly terminated by the Beckett estate, who told the director she would 'never do Beckett again'.[9]

Although Beckett had already begun adapting his own work for film, he steadfastly refused many requests by others. Permissions were very rare, and he offered these authorizations, for instance to Erwin Leiser of the German Film and Television Academy to film *Act Without Words 1* and *2*,[10] with considerable reluctance; in a separate correspondence with Barney Rossett, he strongly disagreed with 'the idea of Act Without Words as a film. It is not a film, not conceived in terms of cinema'.[11] In September 1957, he declined a request from French film producer Francois Beloux to film *Molloy*: 'To my great regret, and in spite of the value of your work, I cannot give you the authorisation that you are asking for. I do not want films to be made of my writings and I shall always hold out against it.'[12] As far as he could, Beckett powerfully asserted his view that *Godot* should not be filmed. Of a proposed film starring Bert Lahr, he wrote, 'I have told Curtis Brown, who urged me to accept, that I shall never allow such a film to be made'.[13] When Ingmar Bergman approached Beckett, via his agent, Beckett replied that he did want *Godot* 'Bergmanized':[14] he told

[8] Jonathan Kalb, *Beckett in Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 79.

[9] MS 4137, *The Observer,* 17 December 1994, Beckett International Foundation: Reading University Library.

[10] Erwin Leiser to Beckett, 2 January 1967, Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, 545.

[11] Beckett to Barney Rosset,27 August 1957, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, vol. 3: 1957–1965*, eds George Craig, Martha Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 64.

[12] Beckett to Herbert Berghof, 28 September 1957, ibid., 66.

[13] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 4 August 1960, Harmon, *No Author Better Served*, 72.

[14] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 10 July 1974, ibid., 318.

Judith Schmidt, who was enthusiastic about the prospect: 'Continue not to want GODOT "turned" into a film, even by Bergman.'[15] Keep Films approached him a second time with the request for a film starring Peter O'Toole, and Beckett again insisted that he did 'not want a film of Godot'.[16] He was not always able to impede these adaptations – 'I am told the American TV Godot was quite awful. I was not consulted about this'[17] – and he did reluctantly grant permission for a TV film to Judith Schmidt in 1962 – 'You may authorize Canadian TV to do Godot. It has been so battered by now that a little more or less can't make much difference'[18] – though not without asserting his view about the correct placement of the cameras: 'I think the problem is how to give the space on the small screen. Roughly speaking I think the solution is in a counterpoint of long shots and close-ups.'[19]

Beckett's resistance to adaptation by other directors parallels his strenuous effort to fix and control his theatre productions by directing them himself, though this increasingly took its toll: 'I'm sick & tired of theatre & of Godot in particular. To have to listen to these words day after day has become torture. Then without respite more theatre in Paris with Madeleine & Chabert till late March.'[20] His deep satisfaction with the level of control in the production of the film of *Comédie* strikingly contrasts with his growing frustration with the contingencies of theatre: 'Far too much theatre for my liking';[21] 'How sick I am of critics, actors, directors, and spectators'.[22] The problem, according to Knowlson, was that 'he had a clear picture of the play in his head and, however well everyone performed, reality could hardly ever live up to this mental vision'.[23] His solution was to counteract the pressures of theatrical contingency with a meticulously pre-determined organization which sought to diminish the specific or contingent quality of the theatrical event and enclose the performance as though it were a pre-recorded artefact. As Enoch Brater argues, 'stage directions multiply as Beckett begins to challenge the theater's traditional function as a collaborative and interpretive art'.[24] In addition to minutely detailed stage directions, Beckett's plays are also supplemented with detailed production notebooks, indicating

[15] Beckett to Barbara Bray, 8 December 1959, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett,* vol. 3, 263.
[16] Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, 545.
[17] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 24 September 1977, Harmon, *No Author Better Served*, 359.
[18] Beckett to Judith Schmidt, 9 December 1961, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 3, 447.
[19] Beckett to Judith Schmidt, 9 December 1961, ibid., 448.
[20] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 11 February 1975, Harmon, *No Author Better Served*, 322.
[21] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 1 September 1974, ibid., 320.
[22] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 11 February 1975, ibid., 322.
[23] Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, 607.
[24] Enoch Brater, *Why Beckett?* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), 107.

diagrams, outlining precise gestures and movements and directions on vocal delivery. As James Knowlson puts it, the notebooks indicate his absolute control over

> the echoes or contrasts of balancing or differing voices, using them like musical instruments; the tone and pitch of an inflexion; the precision and shape of a gesture; the quality of a look; the frequency and duration of a silence or a pause; the direction, speed and manner of a stage move; the pace and rhythms of a section of dialogue, or even, in the case of *Play* or *Not I*, of an entire play.[25]

Beckett's auteurist control, his 'careful, obsessive, almost pedantic visualisation of every moment of the play',[26] militates against the notion of theatre as an unpredictable, turbulent system, emphasizing instead a paradigm which powerfully asserts enclosure and the imposition of a predetermined structure on theatrical elements ordinarily antithetical to containment. His desire to make his plays production proof, to dictate the perception of the audience, is highly unusual in theatre, though it does bear a relation, in its methods and intent, to the auteurist cinema which rose to prominence at the outset of his career as a writer-director. Critical essays published in *Cahiers Du Cinéma*, such as Jacques Rivette's 'The Genius of Howard Hawks' (1953), Alexandre Astruc's *Le caméra-stylo* (1948), Truffaut's *Une certaine tendance du cinéma français* (1954) and Bazin's writings on Hawks, Hitchcock and Renoir, asserted the single figure of the author – the director, or the writer-director – as the determining intelligence in the film's organization, in what became known as the 'la politique des auteurs', or 'the auteur theory'. The theory emphasized the film as the product of a single author's vision, and it was applied to an emerging canon of both classical Hollywood and European art cinema directors, including figures such as Bresson, Godard, Fellini, Resnais, Bergman, Antonioni, Ford, Hawks, Welles, Sirk, Ray, Hitchcock and Lang. An auteur director exhibits, as Andrew Sarris puts it, 'recurrent characteristics of style, which serve as his signature',[27] including styles of framing, mise-en-scène, sound and editing techniques, staging patterns, camera movement, qualities of lighting and working methods with actors. The notion of the singular vision of one artist effaces the collaborative aspect of filmmaking in a model directly imported from the literature of the nouveau roman.

Beckett's willingness to foreclose the possibilities of re-interpretation by other directors, imputing to the perceptual elements of his theatre a rigid self-

[25] Knowlson, *Images of Beckett*, 100.
[26] Ibid., 113.
[27] Andrew Sarris, 'Notes on the Auteur Theory' (1962), in eds Leo Brady and Marshall Cohen, *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 562.

enclosure, overtly declares his work as the product of a singular vision. His style of directing is marked by clear auteurist signature techniques. Actors were instructed to speak their lines according to a strict rhythm and often in a flat, affectless tone. Brenda Bruce, who played Winnie in the first British production, told Knowlson that he once 'brought a metronome into the theatre and set it down on the floor; "this is the rhythm I want you to follow" '. Sian Phillips also discussed 'Beckett's insistence on rhythm and tonelessness'.[28] In the early plays, where movement was less rigorously determined in the stage directions, he blocked every move the actors would make, including the minutest of gestures, in his production notebooks. One of his principal techniques involved the separation of speech from movement. He asked the actors for the Schiller-Theater *Endgame* to 'never let your changes of position and voice come together […] First comes (a) the altered bodily stance; after it, following a slight pause, comes (b) the corresponding utterance'.[29]

Another key feature of his directorial style involved the constant, formalized use of repetition. As Beckett put it while directing the German *Endgame*, 'There are no accidents in *Endgame*; everything is built on analogy and repetition'. His production notebook includes extensive lists of repetitions, and repetitions with variations; many of the additions and alterations he made as a director were attempts to emphasize and reiterate existing formal motifs already in the playtext. Repetition both emphasizes the limitations of habit and routine but it also serves as a musical structure. As Antony Uhlmann observes, 'Beckett often mentioned that he was attempting to achieve something akin to musical structure, and his use of repetition as a playwright, and the emphasis he put on this repetition as a director, are clear attempts to approximate a motif-oriented musical structure'.[30] In rehearsals, Beckett would insist on a precise repetition of vocal delivery for the same phrases, to allow for a clear sense of contrast when there is variation. Pierre Chabert explained that Beckett would instruct him to perform and repeat a gesture in such a way as to allow the audience to recognize the repetition.[31] While never crystallizing into a system in the theatrical sense – as Beckett put it, 'Not for me these Grotowskis and Methods'[32] – Beckett's style of repetition shares certain principal features with the contemporary thinking and practice of the 'politiques des auteurs'. Beckett himself overtly signalled the cinematic aspect of his directorial style in the theatre when he compared

[28] Knowlson, *Images of Beckett*, 109.
[29] Ibid., 115.
[30] Uhlmann, 'Staging Plays', 179.
[31] Ibid., 173.
[32] Ibid., 174.

the use of repeated movements, gestures and tones of voice in *Endgame* to 'the effect of those recurring images inserted into films […] which penetrate the subconscious by repetition'.[33]

As Godard put it in *Cahiers Du Cinéma*, film art 'demands a style; it needs an author, a signature': for Godard, it is Robert Bresson who best 'illustrates this rule in the cinema. He is the French cinema, as Dostoyevsky is the Russian novel and Mozart is German music.'[34] For the *Cahier* critics-turned-filmmakers – and for writer-directors such as Marguerite Duras, who called him 'a very great director, one of the greatest who has ever lived'[35] – Bresson belonged to a small group of post-war French filmmakers who had rigorously developed an auteurist signature style as a counterforce to the psychological realism and conventional literary adaptations of establishment directors such as Julien Duvivier, Jacques Prévert and Claude Autant-Lara. Of each of the filmmakers discussed so far, it is Robert Bresson's radical minimalism, the elliptical indeterminacy of his actors' gestures, their affectless performance style, the formalist repetition of symbolic gestures within each film and across the whole body of his work, which is closest to the pitch and tone, more than any contemporary theatre director, of Beckett's performance style. Beckett's sense of 'form in movement', of the cumulative dispassionate repetition of gestures in various contexts and combinations, bears a striking similarity to Bresson's 'detachment and retarding of the emotions […] through the consciousness of form',[36] an effect created through the specific arrangement and combination of images and gestures. In Bresson's words, 'Do not try, and do not wish, to draw tears from the public with the tears of your models [actors], but with this image rather than that one, this sound rather than that one, exactly in their place'.[37] In films such as *A Man Escaped* (1956), *The Trial of Joan of Arc* (1962), *Au Hazard Balthazar* (1966) and *Mouchette* (1967), Bresson establishes a style which subordinates story and character to the formal repetition and patterning of image and sound, consistently using frontal framing in medium close-up and emphasizing repeated diurnal actions – footsteps, the opening and closing of doors, ascending and descending a staircase – which critics such as Michel Chion have characterized as 'musical'.[38]

[33] McMillan and Fehsenfeld, *Beckett in the Theatre*, 236.
[34] Jean-Luc Godard, *Godard on Godard*, trans. Tom Milne (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), 47.
[35] Marguerite Duras, *Green Eyes*, trans. Carol Barko (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 47.
[36] Susan Sontag, 'Spiritual Style in the Films of Robert Bresson', in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Picador, 1966), 183.
[37] Robert Bresson, *Notes on Cinematography* (London: Pluto Press, 1977), 71.
[38] Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 111.

As with Beckett, Bresson is renowned for a directorial style which seeks to regulate and formalize individual gestures through intensive and particular work with actors. Both developed a dispassionate style of performance notable for its flatness, and its rigorous denial of psychology and motive. Bresson effectively transformed the inherent automatism of cinema, which requires successive repetitions or takes for multiple angles of coverage, into a style: his actors, or 'models' as he preferred to call them, were trained to repeat a scene several times over, to attenuate the expressive, artificial or 'acted' quality, as Susan Sontag puts it, 'until all theatricality had been eliminated'.[39] The technique is explicitly thematized in *Pickpocket* (1959) – a film which Kovács lists alongside Godard's *Breathless* and *Vivre Sa Vie*, Antonioni's *L'Avventura* and Resnais' *Hiroshima Mon Amour* and *Marienbad* as belonging to the 'primary formation' of second wave modernist cinema[40] – in the way Michel learns how to pickpocket through a series of rehearsals until his hands acquire an automatic life of their own. As Bresson put it, 'Models who have become automatic (everything weighed, measured, timed, repeated ten, twenty times) and are then dropped in the middle of the events of your film – their relations with the objects and persons around them will be right, because they will not be thought'.[41] The resulting performance style, characterized by an immobility and mechanical disconnectness – the character's motive beyond description, his or her behaviour attributable neither to social nor psychological motive but rather to a 'psychic singularity'[42] – influences the generation of modernist filmmakers which followed Bresson, such as Antonioni, Godard and Jancsó. In Straub-Huillet's *Not Reconciled* (1965), the dispassionate recitation of monologues, the abstraction of space and character, the use of symbolic gestures, the verbal narration of past events rather than their depiction in a flashback are direct descendants of the Bressonian method. Beckett's technique is similarly characterized, in accounts by actors who worked with him, by repetition: 'He will say a line and then ask the actor or actress to repeat it';[43] by expressive flatness: 'monotone. Without colour, very distant';[44] an emphasis on externality and gesture: 'the position of the body will help you to find the

[39] Sontag, 'Robert Bresson', 180.

[40] András Bálint Kovács, *Screening Modernism: European Art Cinema 1950–1980* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 127.

[41] Bresson, *Notes on Cinematography*, 12.

[42] Quandt, *Robert Bresson*, 147.

[43] Linda Ben-Zvi, ed., *Women in Beckett: Performance and Critical Perspectives* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 31.

[44] Asmus, 'Rehearsal Notes for the German Premiere of Beckett's *That Time* and *Footfalls*', in ed. S.E. Gontarski, *On Beckett* (New York: Grove Press, 1986), 338.

right voice';[45] mechanical distance: 'be curiously uninvolved, impersonal';[46] and the denial of psychology: 'Beckett should not be approached psychologically. He should be performed quite formally.'[47] Both Beckett and Bresson withhold psychology through rigorous plastic, sculptural demands on the actor and the rigid imposition of form.

For Bresson, cinema is emphatically opposed to 'the terrible habit of theatre';[48] for Beckett, this 'terrible habit' is located in the unwelcome adaptations of his work and in productions which distort the rigour of his framing, mise-en-scène and gesture. Beckett's sense of the complex interconnections between theatre and cinema, defined by the emerging sense of himself as an auteur, was not without precedent. Cinematic modernism, as Kovacs points out, 'has a strong theatrical tradition going back to the early twenties, that is, to the very beginning of modernism in cinema.'[49] The use of cinema projections within a live theatre production in his first directorial project, Pinget's *L'Hypothèse,* harks back to the use of mixed media in the modernist theatre of Piscator and Brecht. Articles in *Close Up* discussed the 'merging of theatre with film'[50] in Piscator's pioneering productions of the thirties; for Rudolph Arnheim, Piscator's 'use of film media' and 'projected backgrounds'[51] generated a montage of images 'separated in time and space'[52] which provided a potential model for the use 'parallelism and contrast' and 'counterpoint'[53] in the organization of 'the picture apparatus and the sound apparatus' in cinema. Brecht's theatre, itself profoundly influenced by Piscator's use of montage and mixed media – he proposed a production of *Godot* in 1956 against a background film projection depicting the building of socialism in various parts of the world[54] – drew heavily on certain film techniques, including Chaplin's 'gestic way of performing', what he called the 'V-Effects of Chaplin',[55] and Eisensteinian montage: Frederic Jameson points out the influence on Brecht's method of 'any number of visits to Berlin by Soviet

[45] Kalb, *Beckett in Performance,* 64.
[46] Ben-Zvi, *Women in Beckett*, 22.
[47] Ibid., 48.
[48] Bresson, *Notes on Cinematography,* 16.
[49] Kovács, *Screening Modernism*, 241.
[50] Zygmunt Tonecki, 'At the Boundary of Film and Theatre', *Close Up*, 9.1 (March 1932), 34.
[51] Rudolph Arnheim, *Film*, trans. L.M.Skieveking and Ian F.D. Morrow (London: Faber and Faber, 1933), 208.
[52] Ibid., 222.
[53] Ibid., 260.
[54] John Fuegi, 'Beckett and Brecht', in eds Hans Mayer and Uwe Johnson, *Das Werk von Samuel Beckett. Berliner Colloquium* (Frankfurt/Main, 1975), 185–204.
[55] Bertold Brecht, 'Texts and Fragments on the Cinema' and Marc Silberman, note to 'Less Certainty!!!' (1926), *Brecht on Film and Radio*, 10, 5.

modernists like Eisenstein […] Like Eisenstein's montage, it permitted him to organise and coordinate a great many distinct features of his theatrical practice and aesthetic'.[56]

Antonin Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty emerged from a background of sustained work as an actor and writer in silent cinema, and deep frustration at the arrival of sound: 'the elucidations of speech arrest the unconscious and spontaneous poetry of image; the illustration and completion of the meaning of an image by speech show the limitations of the cinema'.[57] His withdrawal from cinema overlaps with a marked shift in his dramaturgical thinking, between 1931 and 1937, towards ideas clearly imported from his work in silent film, together with the development of a 'sign, gesture and posture language with its own ideographic values'.[58] For Artaud,

> To make a talking picture now, or at any time, seems wrong to me. The Americans who have staked everything on it are preparing a very sinister future for themselves, as are all companies which produce bad films on the pretext that they are more saleable; the talking picture is idiotic, absurd. The very negation of the cinema.[59]

This echoes Beckett's view that 'the cinema', after the arrival of synchronized sound, was 'killed in the cradle'.[60] Sian Phillips recalls a heated conversation between Beckett and Peter O'Toole on the fraught topic of a filmed adaptation of *Godot*, where Beckett remarked, 'Godot can never be filmed. No film with dialogue has ever succeeded.'[61] Beckett owned a copy of *The Theatre and Its Double* (1958)[62] which 'we know he read – "for the occasional blaze" was the way he put it'.[63] Artaud was an immensely important and influential figure in the avant-garde theatre of the forties and fifties, and Beckett was certainly aware of Artaud prior to his own first theatre productions. Roger Blin, who directed the first production of *Godot* in 1953, had been friends with Artaud since 1928, as Beckett notes in a letter: 'Nice fellow, very Montparnasse. I know him well

[56] Fredric Jameson, *Brecht and Method* (London: Verso, 1998), 39.

[57] Antonin Artaud, 'The Premature Old Age of the Cinema', trans. Helen Weaver, *Selected Writings* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976), 124.

[58] Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, trans. Victor Corti (London: John Calder, 1970), 27–29.

[59] Antonin Artaud, *The Collected Works of Antonin Artaud*, vol. 3 (London: Calder and Boyars, 1972), 121.

[60] Beckett to H.O. White, 2 July 1956, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, vol. 2: 1941–1956*, eds George Craig, Martha Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 629.

[61] Knowlson, *Images of Beckett*, 139.

[62] Mark Nixon and Dirk Van Hulle, *Beckett's Library* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 94.

[63] Knowlson, *Images of Beckett*, 107.

by sight, great friend of Artaud, on whom he is going to do a Brod, in three volumes.'[64] He also acknowledged his death in a letter: 'Artaud died the other day in Lucia's home at Ivry.'[65]

Artaud's project in theatre, as with Beckett's, partly emerges from his absorption in film culture. Artaud, like Beckett, strove to diminish the contingencies of live performance by bringing the production under his total control: a performance should only seem to be improvised and merely 'give us the impression of not only being unexpected but also unrepeatable'. He devised a system, similar to Beckett's, of rigorous notation of minute gestures, movements, vocal delivery, so as to allow each performance to be almost mechanically reproducible, 'written down, fixed in its least details' so that the 'final result' would be 'as strict and calculated as that of any written work' since 'the theatre, less than any other means of expression, will not suffer improvisation'.[66] These 'methodically calculated effects' were inspired, as Christopher Innes points out, by his experience with working with such silent film directors as Dreyer, Gance and Dulac.[67] As Innes puts it, 'practically all his theatrical devices […] correspond to film techniques', including an acting style which 'should give at times the impression of slow motion in film'; set designs in which houses and streets were to be constructed 'in relief, like a film set'; the variations in speed and the cutting from large to minute scale, from the collision of stars to the close-ups of scorpions in *The Spurt of Blood;* the use of rhythmic cutting and montage, minimal dialogue and the repetition of highly patterned gestures in his productions of *The Conquest of Mexico* and *The Cenci*.[68] Artaud's rigorous control of the spectator's perception, for instance, by introducing the spotlighting of objects in *The Ghost Sonata* to signal the theatrical equivalent of a close-up, anticipates Beckett's own tightly framed images, which allow for little variation from one production to another, in his drama from *Play* onwards: '*the old white face, long flaring white hair as if seen from above outspread*' (388) in *That Time*, May's pacing up and down a strip of '*one metre, a little off-centre audience right*' (399) in *Footfalls*, the 'white foot of pallet edge of frame stage left' (429) in *A Piece of Monologue,* W in her rocking-chair 'controlled mechanically without assistance from W' (434) in *Rockaby,* L and R seated at the table in *Ohio Impromptu*.

Beckett's remark about *Not I* – 'I hope the piece may work on the nerves of the audience, not on its intellect'[69] – echoes Artaud's emphasis on 'nervous

[64] Beckett to George Duthuit, 27 February 1950, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 2, 182.
[65] Beckett to Thomas McGreevy, 18 March 1948, ibid., 75.
[66] Christopher Innes, *Avant Garde Theatre* (London: Routledge, 1993), 61–62.
[67] Ibid., 62.
[68] Ibid., 72, 75.
[69] Quoted in Enoch Brater, 'Dada, Surrealism and the Genesis of *Not I*', *Modern Drama*, 18 (1975), 53.

magnestisms' in his Theatre of Cruelty.[70] He originally wrote *Not I* with a close-up of a mouth in mind, asking Ruby Cohn in 1971, during rehearsals for the German *Happy Days*: 'Can you stage a mouth? Just a moving mouth with the rest of the stage in darkness?'[71] The script specifies a mouth '*faintly lit from close-up and below*' (376), an image maintained at all costs by placing the actress in a pillory-like device to hold her mouth firmly in the spotlight: the close-up, by abstracting the mouth from the actor, visually embodies Mouth's detachment from the story of 'she' and her denial of the first person. Enoch Brater argues that Mouth's denial of self-perception partly alludes to 'the flight from extraneous perception breaking down in inescapability of self-perception' (323) in *Film*, and suggests a similarity with the disembodied mouths in Cocteau's 1935 film *The Blood of a Poet*.[72] When Tristram Powell filmed Billie Whitelaw's performance of *Not I* for the BBC in a tight close-up of her mouth, Beckett greatly admired the result – he described the image as 'Miraculous'[73] – and in a subsequent theatrical production which he directed at the Théâtre d'Orsay in April 1978, he omitted the role of the Auditor, later remarking, in light of the exclusive focus on the mouth in the film version, that he had 'never seen him function effectively'.[74] The figure of the Auditor, '*enveloped from head to foot in loose black djellaba, with hood, faintly lit*' (376), had previously functioned as a listening figure reflecting, as Anna McMullan puts it, 'the audience's role back at them'[75] by listening in silence to Mouth's story. By eliminating the Auditor and focussing exclusively on the close-up, Beckett partly diminished the theatricality of the piece by sealing off the image from any recognition of a live audience.

Artaud's production notebook for his 1935 production of *The Cenci*, which also includes notes by Roger Blin, insistently reiterates the importance of discipline, precision and strict organization. Detailed notes outline Artaud's sense of pattern, motif and tempo, where movement often emerges from the stillness of a precisely blocked tableau scene, as in the opening which references Veronese's *The Marriage at Cana*.[76] Similarly, Beckett would often begin the

[70] Quoted in Innes, *Avant Garde Theatre,* 79.
[71] Ruby Cohn, *A Beckett Canon* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 315.
[72] Enoch Brater, *Beyond Minimalism: Beckett's Late Style in the Theater* (New York: Oxford Universty Press, 1987), 20, 25.
[73] Billie Whitelaw, *Billie Whitelaw…Who He? An Autobiography* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1995), 132.
[74] Samuel Beckett, letter to David Hunsberger and Linda Kendall, 16 November 1986, quoted in S.E. Gontarski, 'Revising Himself: Performance as Text in Samuel Beckett's Theatre', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 22.1 (1998), 131–155; 143.
[75] Anna McMullan, *Theatre on Trial: Samuel Beckett's Later Drama* (London: Routledge, 1993), 82.
[76] Innes, *Avant Garde Theatre*, 64.

productions he directed with frozen tableaux. As the directions in the notebook for his 1975 German *Godot* indicate, Beckett altered the opening and closing sections of both acts to incorporate two tableaux scenes which echo one another. As James Knowlson points out, 'each act began with a lengthy (and newly introduced) "wartestelle" or "waiting point"'. His productions of *Krapp's Last Tape* also included a series of 'frozen postures'; Krapp would remain immobile with 'his hands outstretched on the table in front of him'. The production of *Happy Days* opened with a frozen pose which Beckett called Winnie's 'sleeping pose'.[77] These tableaux suggest, as S.E. Gontarski notes, 'a series of still pictures or photographs more than continuous action or movement'.[78]

Beckett also shared with Artaud an obsessive concern with geometrical patterns and mathematical sequences. The production of *The Cenci* was characterized by the 'dominant image of the circle, which forms the pattern for the majority of individual and group movements, and culminates in the torture wheel on which Beatrice swings'.[79] Movement alternates between precisely delineated circular motions, for representing both the 'circular and closed world' that Artaud associated with cruelty, the 'gravitational movement of that world', and symmetrically organized parallel lines, as when Count Cenci enters, and the guests, blocked in two parallel rows facing one another, move towards each other in strictly organized symmetrical sequences, as annotated in the notebook: 'G, 3 paces; F, 2 paces; E, 1 big pace; J, 1 little pace'.[80] Beckett also structured his production of *Godot* around recurring geometrical motifs. In the section in his notebook marked 'Inspection Place', four movements are listed as 'clockwise circuits around the perimeter of the stage'.[81] Beckett established a contrast between Vladimir, who tends to move in a curved path, and Estragon, who moves towards the stone in a straight line: 'like arc and chord in a geometry exercise, these two contrasting patterns of movement connect the cardinal points of tree and stone and define the boundaries of a closed, circular universe and exhibit the differing tendencies of Vladimir and Estragon'.[82] Artaud called his methodical notations 'reflective mathematics' and in *The Cenci* notebook discusses the 'mathematical comings and goings of the actors around others which traces in the air of the stage a true geometry'.[83] This echoes the complex

[77] Knowlson, *Images of Beckett*, 126.
[78] Ibid., 118.
[79] Innes, *Avant Garde Theatre,* 65.
[80] Ibid., 65.
[81] McMillan and Fehsenfeld, *Beckett in the Theatre*, 97.
[82] Ibid., 103.
[83] Innes, *Avant Garde Theatre,* 63, 66.

mathematical sequences of movement in Beckett's production of the German *Endgame*. Clov is given sixteen entrances and sixteen exits, and Hamm stops him twenty-six times; each of Clov's movements was calculated mathematically: 'It's almost like a dance', says Beckett, 'equal number of paces, rhythm kept equal.' Beckett counted out eight steps when directing Bollman as Clov, as he moved from the door to the armchair. When he approaches Hamm, or leaves him, he takes either two steps, or four steps or eight. During the 'thinker-episode', Beckett ordered Clov's movements into alternating steps of six and four. When he was asked about the connections of these numbers, he replied, 'c'est pythagoreen'.[84]

For Beckett, as for Artaud, cinema provided a model of formal enclosure and repetition which could mitigate the turbulence and unpredictability of live theatre. Beckett's meticulous pre-determination, his diminution of the contingent quality of live theatre, once again poses a challenge to his own oft cited distinction between media: 'If we can't keep our genres more or less distinct, or extricate them from the confusion that has them where they are, we might as well go home and lie down.'[85] The imposition of a closed geometric system on his plays chimes with Deleuze's definition of cinema as 'the determination of a closed system, a relatively closed system which includes everything which is present in the image – sets, characters and props – framing'.[86] The cinematic frame, Deleuze argues,

> has always been geometrical or physical, depending on whether it constitutes the closed system in relation to chosen coordinates or in relation to selected variables. The frame is therefore sometimes conceived of as a spatial composition of parallels and diagonals, the constitution of a receptacle such that the blocs [masses] and the lines of the image which come to occupy it will find an equilibrium and their movements will find an invariant.[87]

Modernist film directors, such as Dreyer, Eisenstein and Antonioni, in their exploration of the limits of the medium, foreground the geometric conception of the frame. As Deleuze points out,

> Eisenstein studied the effects of the golden section on cinematographic imagery; Dreyer explored horizontals and verticals, symmetries, the high and the low, alternations of black and white; the Expressionists developed diagonals and counter-diagonals, pyramidal or triangular figures which agglomerate bodies,

[84] McMillan and Fehsenfeld, *Beckett in the Theatre*, 236.
[85] Beckett to Barney Rosset, 27 August 1957, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett,* vol. 3, 64.
[86] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Athlone Press, 1983), 15.
[87] Ibid., 16.

> crowds, places, the collision of these masses, a whole paving of the frame 'which takes on a form like the black and white squares of a chess-board' (Lang's *The Nibelungen* and *Metropolis*). Even light is the subject of a geometrical optic, when it is organised with shadows into two halves, or into alternating rays, as is done by one Expressionist tendency[88]

In Antonioni's *L'Eclisse,* geometric relations are emphasized by holding the empty frame both before and after the actors have entered and departed its rigidly defined limits; actors are fixed within these geometrical compositions, which often include secondary frames, such as doors, windows, mirrors, as well as the primary frame, the screen itself. Frames within frames divide and subdivide into 'sub-sets or are themselves the sub-set of a larger set'[89] within a closed geometric system.

While directing the geometrically re-conceived German *Godot* in 1975, Beckett was also preoccupied with writing the TV film, *Ghost Trio*, and then directing English and German versions a year later. In *Ghost Trio*, the primary frame is divided up into subsets of frames: the door, the window, the floor, the pallet, the mirror. As Erik Tonning points out, 'the rectangular shape of the screen is echoed in the insistent reproduction of similar geometrical shapes inside the "box" itself, as well as in all visible objects'.[90] Formal patterns of shots, which repeatedly emphasize the division of the space into geometrical shapes, are called forth by an unseen controlling auteur figure, V, who exerts authority not only over the movements of F, but also over the edited sequence of shots. Both versions of the production are shot from three camera angles, A, B and C, and divided into three parts, which are named 'I Pre-action, II Action, III Re-action' (407). The film is divided into the three stages through which F and the camera assimilate and then enact the physical tasks which V, the female voice calling the shots, prescribes. V is a voiceover, though not of an interior compound figment of a dead girl from the figure's past, as in *Eh Joe*. In one aspect, she is the voice of external, depersonalized directorial authority, to which both F and the camera instantaneously react. She sets the scene in the first part, directs F's movement in the second and remains silent in the third while F performs the earlier routine, with minor variations.

As Gontarski notes, 'with *Ghost Trio*, Beckett began immediately in cinematic terms, alternating shots and dialogue […] Beckett's problems from the first were

[88] Ibid., 17.

[89] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London: Athlone Press, 1989), 20.

[90] Erik Tonning, *Samuel Beckett's Abstract Drama: Works for Stage and Screen, 1962–1985* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), 169.

formal, pictorial and auditory';[91] the heightened formal and geometric awareness of the frame, and the possibilities of control exerted through edited sequences of shots suggest a work for the screen distinct from his work for the stage. Yet once again, a relation emerges between the contingencies of theatre, from which he needed a break, and the mechanically reproduced performance, where he was able, as Jonathan Kalb claims, to 'wield a directorial baton sufficiently powerful to conduct performances exactly the way he wants to record them for posterity in that form'.[92] While directing *Ghost Trio*, Beckett characterized the particular style of movement he had in mind for F by referring the actor Ronald Pickup to Kleist's essay 'On the Marionette Theatre'. Beckett's allusion to Kleist in this context is well-documented, including an essay by James Knowlson, to whom Beckett directly related his use of Kleist (Knowlson and Pilling, 1979, 279), and an article by Anthony Uhlmann, which explores Beckett's philosophical interest in Kleist and 'the external nature both of expression itself and of the affect in his work' (Uhlmann, 2009, 56). Uhlmann notes that Beckett's Kleistian style of theatricality serves as a counterpoint to the dominant tradition of acting as developed by Stanislavski, with its emphasis on interiority, naturalism and affect. I would like to explore Beckett's relation to anti-naturalist performance style by delineating an overlooked tradition of theatre which *Ghost Trio* summons, and which is predominantly defined not only by Kleist's essay, but also by Meyerhold's Biomechanics as filtered through Eisenstein.

Although Beckett does not mention Meyerhold directly in his correspondence or elsewhere, it is highly unlikely, given Beckett's extensive study of Eisenstein, and the resurgence of interest in Biomechanics in the mid-seventies, that he was not aware of Meyerhold's work. Jonathan Kalb briefly mentions possible similarities between 'certain dictated behaviours'[93] in their respective directorial techniques, without exploring the implications of this similarity. No other study makes the connection, and this is surprising given Meyerhold's centrality to the less dominant genealogy of anti-naturalist theatre to which Beckett clearly belongs, and the fascinating, mutually illuminating parallels in their directorial methods. Beckett's explicit declarations of interest in Eisenstein, a relation which also serves to elaborate his use of Kleist's essay 'On the Marionette Theatre', reinforces my textual and performative analysis. Beckett had long admired and studied Eisenstein since writing to him in 1936; as a pupil of Meyerhold, Eisenstein

[91] S.E. Gontarski, *The Intent of Undoing in Samuel Beckett's Dramatic Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 121.

[92] Kalb, *Beckett in Performance*, 95.

[93] Ibid., 43.

took extensive notes on the Biomechanical method, which he combined with techniques in Rudolph Bode's *Expressive Gymnastics* (1911) and his own reading of Kleist's essay to provide a basis for his work with actors at the Proletkult Theatre, and then later his films. By drawing on previously neglected aspects of Eisenstein's influence, and the use of anti-naturalist theatrical technique in the recorded medium of TV, my account further suggests alternative cross-links between Beckett's work for stage and screen, despite his often cited inflexibility on the matter of intermedial adaptations. Beckett's invocation of Kleist in *Ghost Trio,* as inflected by Eisenstein's reading, further informs his production of *Waiting for Godot* in 1975, in particular the style of movement he required for Lucky's dance, and it also summons the genealogy of Yeats, Maeterlinck and Gordon Craig, the precursors of Biomechanical anti-naturalist performance style.

In 1905, Stanislavski invited Meyerhold to return to Moscow to lead his new experimental Theatre Studio. Over the next few years, Meyerhold developed a theatrical technique in reaction against the expressive vitalism of Stanislavski's Moscow Art Theatre by shifting the focus from psychology to movement. For Meyerhold, movement rather than emotion is 'the basis of theatrical spectacle. First movement, then emotion leading to the word, and then the word itself.'[94] Meyerhold developed an idea, recurrent in the scientific and philosophical methodologies of Taylorism and Pavlovian reflexology, that the body's responses to external stimuli preceded the formation of an emotion, that in fact the body's response – for instance, an automatic reflex signifying fear, as distinct from the mental perception of fear – was the emotion itself. Meyerhold's thinking and practice culminate in the Biomechanical technique: the actor is a machine responding to stimuli, rather than his or her own mental perception and interior states. Biomechanics sought to free the actor from the constraints of character psychology by prioritizing movement, balance and reflex response, 'the ability to realise in feelings, movements and words a task which is prescribed externally'.[95] By the mid-twenties, according to Alma Law, 'the term "Biomechanics" had acquired magical properties among Western European and American journalists, theatre historians and left-leaning intellectuals'.[96] Meyerhold's rehabilitation begins in the mid-fifties – the development of his project was cut short by Stalinist social realism and eclipsed by the dominance of Stanislavki's system – with the gradual

[94] Vsevolod Meyerhold, *Meyerhold on Theatre*, ed. Edward Braun (London: Methuen, [1969] 1998), 31.

[95] Ibid., 201.

[96] Alma Law and Mel Gordon, *Meyerhold, Eisenstein and Biomechanics* (North Carolina: McFarland, 1996), 6.

release of first hand documents; Grotowski at the Polish Theatre Laboratory and his pupil Eugenio Barba at Odin Teatret claimed to have 'reinvented' Biomechanics during the sixties and early seventies, and in 1974, Mel Gordon wrote an article on Biomechanics for *The Drama Review* in which he made the first attempt to reconstruct the exercises based on available descriptions and interviews.[97]

Biomechanical exercises were divided into the three stages through which external stimulus provokes a 'volitional reflex' reaction in the actor: 'the nature of an actor must essentially tend to respond to the stimulation of the reflexes […] To respond to one's reflexes means to render in movement, feeling and speech a task imposed from the outside'.[98] It is a structure of action and reaction which resembles the pattern set forth in the stage directions of *Ghost Trio*, namely, the three camera angles, A, B and C, and the division into three Parts, 'I Pre-action, II Action, III Re-action' (407). It is not only the denial of the actor's usual method for expressing affect, in particular of vocal and facial expression, that resembles Meyerhold's technique: the tripartite division and the reflex gestures of F and the camera, in one aspect, parallel the Biomechanical division of exercises into three stages: 'I Intention II Realisation III Reaction'. According to this scheme,

> *the intention* is the intellectual assimilation of a task prescribed externally by the dramatist, the director, or the initiative of the performer. *The realisation* is the cycle of volitional, mimetic and vocal reflexes. The *reaction* is the submission of the volitional reflex according to the realisation of the mimetic and vocal reflexes and in the preparation for the receiving of a new task.[99]

This system of physical stimulus and response served to integrate monologue and mime, while maintaining an absolute separation between voice and physical action, as though the character's body, the machine, were abstracted from the actor, the machinist. *Ghost Trio* allocates the separation of body, voice and movement to three distinct entities. V is F's machinist, though F is not the only machine. The camera is as reactive as F, an application of Biomechanics to an actual machine.

Meyerhold's elimination, as he puts it, of 'superfluous, unproductive movements', the imbuing of those movements with a 'rhythm' reinforced by the 'correct positioning of the body's centre of gravity'[100] derives, as Robert Leach observes, from a combination of Taylorism – the system of motion economy studies designed to reduce inefficiency in manual labour – and the structure of

[97] Ibid., 7.
[98] Alain Piette, 'Crommelynck and Meyerhold: Two Geniuses Meet on the Stage', *Modern Drama*, 39.3 (1996), 446.
[99] Meyerhold, *Meyerhold on Theatre*, 201.
[100] Ibid., 197.

external stimulus and reflex response in 'Pavlov's reflexology'.[101] Beckett studied Pavlov, amongst other behavioural psychologists in the twenties and thirties: he mentions Pavlov in his essay on *Finnegans Wake,*[102] and the theories of Wolfgang Köhler inform *Act Without Words*,[103] which is in one aspect a theatrical experiment in reflexology. *Ghost Trio* combines reflexology with the geometrical economy of Meyerhold's abstracted version of Taylorism: as Meyerhold put it, 'the geometric and most efficient Taylorised gesture is the straight line plus the right angle'.[104]

In Part I, V directs the camera to 'look closer' and 'look again', naming the objects before the camera moves from the long shot of Camera A to close-ups of the floor, wall, door, pallet and window. A cut is made, in each instance, to a '*grey rectangle*' (409), the close-up serving to defamiliarize the object by conferring upon it a perfectly geometric precision. The voice then directs the camera to observe the seated figure, F, before the camera cautiously moves in, from Camera A, to C, a 'near shot', to '*close- up of head, hands, cassette*' (409). As Beckett's manuscript notes reinforce, the camera is an agency, 'it stops and stares', confined in its mobility to geometrical lines and angles, 'to stealthy or lightning (cut shots) advance or withdrawal to positions established'.[105] In Part II, V directs both the camera's and F's movement around those rectangles, the technical impetus that stimulates F's and the camera's instant responses. Both agencies, F and the camera, embodiment and perception, respond mechanically to V's external command. The camera, as much as F, with a precise economy of movement, traces the straight lines and right angles, enacts the space of the room as it moves through its perceptibly geometric space of rectangles within rectangles: both the camera and F's movement invokes the precise and rationalized economy, the reduction of movement to the shortest trajectory in Biomechanics.

The formalized precision of gesture and camera also fulfils Beckett's original intention for *Film*, which he discussed in a production meeting, though it was not explicitly achieved in the final cut:

> I want to fortify the analogy between the inspection of the street and the inspection of the room in the complete series by having the elements involved inspected in the same order. If it's 1-3-5-2-7-6 … we give numbers to the elements in the room – exactly in the same order – by E in the street and by O in the room … It's a kind of integrity, formal integrity.[106]

[101] Robert Leach, *Vsevolod Meyerhold* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 76.
[102] Beckett, 'Dante... Bruno.Vico..Joyce', 13.
[103] Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, 419.
[104] Law and Gordon, *Meyerhold, Eisenstein and Biomechanics,* 149.
[105] MS 1519/1, *Ghost Trio,* Beckett International Foundation: Reading University Library.
[106] Beckett, tape of production conference, Gontarski, *Intent of Undoing,* 131.

The dual embodiment perception, split between the agency of the camera recording F, and the movement of F, recalls the formal arrangements in the elaborate series of cuts between Camera A and B in the TV script for *Krapp*, while the geometrical economy of movement anticipates the mathematical permutations of *Quad*.

The embodied, reactive observer, Camera B, and Krapp's own gestural refrains attain a crystalline coldness of form in *Ghost Trio*, an abstracted, spectral re-enactment of Meyerhold's Biomechanical reflex response technique. Part II is reminiscent of Biomechanical exercises intended to develop physical or reflexive arousal in the actor; F moves round the room under V's instructions, a training exercise for Part III during which no voice is heard. In one of these exercises, the actor, in a state of inanimate repose, on a given signal sweeps his hands swiftly upward; his body is then also swept up by his hands, which are then brought sharply downward before they, and by extension the rest of his body, come back to rest. The movement is restrained, much less athletic in *Ghost Trio,* but the principle of reflexive reaction, and the general arc of the movement which follows, bears resemblance to F: '*bowed forward, face hidden, clutching with both hands a small cassette*' (409), when V utters 'he will now think he hears her' he immediately raises both his head and his left hand 'sharply', and then '*turns still crouched to door*', his body in a '*tense pose*' (410). His hand, initiating the contraction of the rest of his body, remains tensely poised for a moment in mid-air, as if listening for the unspoken female voice, before V's intervention – 'No one' – cues the hand, the body's centre of gravity, to stop listening, and to lead the rest of the body as it comes back to rest: '*relapses again into opening pose, bowed over cassette*' (410).

Amongst other sources – for instance, a discussion in *Close Up*[107] – it is possible Beckett encountered Meyerhold in his study of the theoretical writing of Eisenstein, according to Alma Law the only 'artist who fully explored the aesthetic and scientific principles of Biomechanics'.[108] Eisenstein took extensive notes on Biomechanics, taught the exercises from the late 1920s to his students at the Moscow State Institute of Cinematography (to which Beckett had requested admission), and considered the method, as a system for training actors, 'the best there is'.[109] Techniques partly derived from his training in Biomechanics clearly inform the performance style of his first film, *Strike* (1925); discovering a unifying method in all three systems – 'the principle of the centre of gravity' –

[107] Zygmunt Tonecki, 'The Theatre of the Future and the Talking Film', *Close Up*, 8.1 (March 1931), 28.
[108] Law and Mel Gordon, *Meyerhold, Eisenstein and Biomechanics*, 75.
[109] Law and Gordon, *Meyerhold, Eisenstein and Biomechanics*, 70.

Eisenstein developed his own training exercises by emphasizing the actor's ability to sense, at any given moment, the central gesture around which all other muscles are grouped. A single reflex gesture initiates the contraction and release of the body's entire motor system, altering the direction of movement. A Proletkult actor, required to commit a strangulation on stage, begins with an isolated gesture, the unfolding of a fist, the chattering of teeth, around which the rest of the body accordingly contracts.

According to Eisenstein, the methods of Meyerhold and Bode, whereby the centre of gravity directs the entire motor system, distributing a rhythmic contraction throughout the body's extremities, followed by a rhythmic release, were 'already recognised and confirmed by observations of the marionette theatre made by Kleist'.[110] In Kleist's essay 'About the Marionette Theatre', 'every movement had a centre of gravity; it was sufficient to direct that within the puppet, and the limbs being nothing but pendulums followed mechanically without assistance. This movement was very simple, he added; whenever the centre of gravity was moved in a straight line, the limbs described a curve.'[111] Eisenstein reformulates Kleist's notion of the line traced by the centrifugal limb in his essay 'Principles of Movement in Our Theatre': 'each movement is the result of the work of the entire body. The extremities play the role of a pendulum. A marionette cannot err in the mechanics of movements because of the physical disposition of force'.[112]

As Uhlmann and Knowlson have observed, the Kleistian marionette informs the effect of rhythmical weightlessness Beckett intended. As Kleist puts it, the actor should move 'bowed through space with no visible propulsion', which is to say that no volition of his own propels him forward. F's walk around the geometric lines of the room is characterized by a weightless grace and ease, as Knowlson observes,[113] but his gestures, as they emerge from and then return to stasis, are also sharp reflex movements, which suggests Kleist as filtered through the reflexology of Soviet Biomechanics and Eisenstein's concept of the recoil mechanism. The raising of F's listening hand when 'he thinks he hears her', as Knowlson observes, is 'even more abrupt' than the BBC version,[114] the

[110] Sergei Eisenstein, 'Notes on Proletkult Theatre' (1922), quoted in Law and Gordon, *Meyerhold, Eisenstein and Biomechanics*, 176, 181.

[111] Heinrich Von Kleist, 'About the Marionette Theatre' (1918), trans. Cherna Murray, *Life and Letters Today*, 16.8 (1937), 101–105, 101.

[112] Eisenstein, 'Principles of Movement in our Theatre', Law and Gordon, *Meyerhold, Eisenstein and Biomechanics*, 167.

[113] James Knowlson and John Pilling, *Frescoes of the Skull: The Later Prose and Drama of Samuel Beckett* (London: Calder Publications, 1979), 279, 283.

[114] Ibid., 279.

pendulous single gesture tracing the curve of the body. The voice of V pulls the strings, guiding F around the room. His hand pushes the door and window open, causing a contraction in which his whole body, imitating the movement of his hand, pushes outwards to investigate. The tense pose is held for five seconds before he '*removes hand from door*' or window, an Eisensteinian recoil mechanism which brings his body back to a state of rest.[115]

As Anthony Uhlmann observes, the extent of influence of the Kleist essay antedates rehearsals for *Ghost Trio*: his marionettes were invoked in rehearsals for *Happy Days* at the Schiller-Theatre in Berlin in 1971.[116] I would like to suggest that the Kleist essay also informs the visual conception of Lucky's dance, which crystallized in his 1975 production of *Godot*. It is not only F's long white hair in *Ghost Trio* that recalls Lucky, or the rope around Lucky's neck which suggests a marionette, but also a sense, amplified by reference to Kleist, that marionettes 'are not hindered with the inertness of matter, the quality most resistant to dancing'.[117]

The extensive notebooks Beckett kept assiduously during this production is testament to his view that *Godot*, in terms of its sense of the stage, was 'a mess'.[118] Beckett considered the interpretative content of *Godot*'s stage directions imprecise, not formal enough: '*Lucky dances*', where no further indication of movement is given, is a case in point. This direction is unusual given Beckett's widely noted propensity for absolute precision in his textual directions. As Pierre Chabert puts it,

> the direction is always written into his texts in the most literal way, showing itself in a theatrical language where the word is never dissociated from the place where it is spoken or from the concrete language of the stage, where the word is never conceived outside the framework of the accompanying gesture, the movement, the place, the physical stance, the bodily posture.[119]

Beckett's thinking about Kleist in relation to *Ghost Trio,* where the level of precision in the stage directions, both for actor and camera, leaves little room for interpretation, may have enabled him to sharpen the image of Lucky's dance.

[115] The movement resembles Beckett's own manner of opening doors, as described by his friend André Bernold: 'when opening a door, his hands would seem to sweep through his whole body. He would lean forward, examine, place his palm on the doorknob and, suddenly straightening up again, would spring forward with an enquiring step, as if surprised at having met with such little resistance'. André Bernold, *L'Amitié de Beckett: 1979–1989* (Paris: Hermann, 1992), 74.

[116] Anthony Uhlmann, 'Expression and Affect in Kleist, Beckett and Deleuze', in *Deleuze and Performance* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 56.

[117] Kleist, 'About the Marionette Theatre', 105.

[118] McMillan and Fehsenfeld, *Beckett in the Theatre*, 87.

[119] Pierre Chabert, 'Beckett as Director', *Gambit*, 7.28 (1976), 41–63; 52.

The Schiller-Theater production notebooks lack a visual notation for the dance, although Beckett makes a telling revision of the text so as to exclude all the alternative titles Pozzo gives for the dance, leaving only 'the Net. He thinks he's entangled in a net'.[120] As Toby Silverman Zinman notes, 'to dance in a net' is an English proverb which means 'to proceed under observation while supposing oneself unobserved'. It is cited in *English Proverbs,* with examples from 1659 and 1670: 'think not you are undetected. You dance in a net, and you think no body sees you.'[121] Zinman does not make the connection to the Kleist essay: Pozzo's description of the dance as 'the Net' resonates, I would argue, with a passage in Kleist, if 'Net' is understood in this proverbial context. In this sense, it refers to the balance between performing with or without the self-consciousness of being watched. Kleist's marionettes are graceful precisely because they lack self-consciousness: they are entirely unaware of a spectating audience. To demonstrate the rigid awkwardness and incapacity caused by self-consciousness, one of the narrators in Kleist recounts a story in which a boy loses the free play of his gestures, a result of becoming self-conscious. The posture the boy adopts is similar to Lucky's dance as manifest in productions, and Beckett's image of 'the Tree':

> I bathed about three years ago, with a young man who at that time possessed extraordinary charm. He might have been about sixteen, and only indistinctly could one see the first traces of vanity […] We had recently seen in Paris 'The youth drawing a thorn from his foot'. A copy of this statue is well known and is present in most German collections. A glance he cast in a large mirror, while putting his foot on a stool to try it, reminded him of this statue. He smiled and told me of the discovery he had made. I had had the same idea but, either to test the strength of his charm, or to damp his vanity a little, I laughed, and replied that he saw ghosts. He blushed, and lifted his foot again to prove it, but the experiment failed, as could have been foreseen. Confused, he lifted his foot three, four, perhaps even ten times. In vain, he was unable to produce the same movement again. On the contrary, his movements now had such a comical element that I could hardly refrain from laughing. From that day, so to speak from that moment, an inconceivable change occurred in the young man. He began to stand before the mirror for days, and lost one charm after another. *An invisible and inconceivable power had come like an iron net about the free play of his gestures,* and after one year there was not a trace of his charm which before had delighted the eyes of his companions (my italics)[122]

[120] McMillan and Fehsenfeld, *Beckett in the Theatre*, 66.
[121] Toby Silverman Zinman, 'Lucky's Dance in *Waiting for Godot*', *Modern Drama*, 38 (1995), 308–323; 310.
[122] Kleist, 'About the Marionette Theatre', 105.

In Zinman's first-hand observation of the dance from the earliest productions onwards, 'the actor begins by lifting one foot, bending his knee at a right angle to his other leg, and raising his arms'.[123] This posture is 'sometimes repeated twice more', when in Act Two, Vladimir suggests, after they have done their exercises, that they 'do the tree' as a pastime, following which, we are told, '*Vladimir does the tree, staggering about on one leg*'. The staggering is partly an imitation of Lucky's loss of balance after raising his leg, and in performance, would resemble Lucky's dance. Alan Schneider mentions 'the tree' as being close to what Beckett intended: 'Sam once even drew a little diagram to show me exactly what he meant.'[124] Beckett also sketched a diagram for Peter Hall in 1955 – '*Let's do the tree.* Sketch herewith'[125] – representing a man with his knee at a right angle to his other leg. The posture – one foot lifted, the knee bent at a right angle to the other leg – resembles Kleist's description of the boy, imitating the classical statue of 'the youth drawing a thorn from his foot', standing in front of the mirror for days, until self-consciousness comes 'like an iron net about the free play of his gestures'.

Kleist's marionettes are graceful precisely because they lack self-consciousness. They exist in a state of prelapsarian grace, entirely unaware, both of the materiality of the body – 'they are not hindered with the inertness of matter' – and of a spectating audience – part of 'the structure of a body which has […] no consciousness'.[126] As Martha Fehsenfeld points out, to 'relapse', as when F '*relapses to opening* pose', is defined by the OED as 'to slip back as into illness or to fall into sin or error'.[127] The unaffected response and ease of motion of the marionette, according to Kleist, is an aspect of an immateriality unencumbered with the original sin of self-consciousness. Like Keaton-O and Joe, F moves around the room, pushing open the door and window, though it is to investigate the possible appearance of the unspoken female he thinks he hears, not to shut out potential observers: unlike O in *Film*, F does not suffer from an 'anguish of perceivedness' (*Film,* 323). Part III repeats the camera placements and close-ups of I and II, except this time the shots also assume F's perspective, the absence of V permitting us to see through the eyes of F. For instance, a medium shot of F opening the window is followed by the view from the window; F near the mirror is followed by his face in the mirror. The shot of F's face in the mirror,

[123] Zinman, 'Lucky's Dance in *Waiting for Godot*', 313.
[124] Alan Schneider, 'Working with Beckett', in ed. S.E. Gontarski, *On Beckett: Essays and Criticism* (New York: Grove Press, 1986), 245.
[125] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 14 December 1955, Harmon, *No Author Better Served*, 4.
[126] Kleist, 'About the Marionette Theatre', 105, 103, 105.
[127] Martha Fehsenfeld, 'Beckett's Late Works: An Appraisal', *Modern Drama*, 25 (1982), 355–362; 359.

unlike Keaton-O who covers the mirror to avoid his reflection, occurs without the horror of self-recognition. It is the first clear view we have of F's face, though it is unclear at first, due to the tightly framed close-up, whether we see F or his mirror reflection. F does not convey, in the Benjaminian sense, an estrangement before his own mirror-image. He looks at himself without any trace of self-consciousness, unaware of his dual status as 'presence' and reflection, perfectly at home in mute image.

Lucky's sense of being observed, closely related to the tacit assumption that he dances to impress his master, in order to remain in his service, has fallen like a net over his gestures. Mechanism, weight and resistance have encrusted upon the suppleness of his body. Unlike Kleist's marionettes, where 'every movement [has] a centre of gravity', part of 'the structure of a body which has […] no consciousness',[128] Lucky is incapacitated by the superabundant consciousness that he is being watched and judged. He is pulled downwards by the excess weight he is compelled to carry, an inversion of Kleist's marionettes, who are 'anti-gravitational', whose movements are such because 'the lifting power is greater than that which keeps them down'.[129] Kleist remarks in his essay that 'the dancer who wished to perfect his art could learn many things from [puppets]'.[130] Lucky is hailed not only as a dancer but a thinker, and Pozzo, the 'actor', hopes by pulling the rope to edify as well as amuse his audience. Beckett's more explicit later use of the Kleistian marionette, in his role as director, reiterates this earlier compositional indebtedness.

Lucky's dance represents the grotesque body, fallen into graceless self-consciousness and decrepitude as it struggles to attain the ease and fluency of the marionette. As Uhlmann observes of F in *Ghost Trio*, 'the work which attempts to create an external expression requires an actor to lose all such self-consciousness, to allow the body, as it were, to follow its own logic without trying to impose an interpretation'.[131] Lucky's dance is the antithesis to the formalist anti-mimetic gestures of F in *Ghost Trio*, which counter the body's gravitational ballast with a lightness and vertical lift by negating the interiority of the actor. The dance enacts the defeat of the depersonalized body of the marionette by the unregulated body of the grotesque overcome with self-consciousness. In this sense, it is reminiscent of the grotesque tradition of marionette theatre: for instance, in Michael de Ghelderode's *The School for Clowns* (1936), there is a

[128] Kleist, 'About the Marionette Theatre', 101, 105, 103.
[129] Ibid., 103.
[130] Ibid., 101.
[131] Uhlmann, 'Expression and Affect in Kleist, Beckett and Deleuze', 66.

mime at the beginning of Act 1 Scene 7 where the 'master of buffoons' '*improvises the strange figures of a tipsy puppet,* and when the music ends, the dancer *remains as though suspended on wires*'.[132] The grotesque, a genre of low comedy which has its origins in the fairground booth, French cabaret and English music hall, is a kind of low comedy, an 'exaggerated parody',[133] as Meyerhold puts it, of the accidents and infirmities of the body. The formal patterns of gesture in *Godot* are structured according to the principle of the grotesque. In accounts of the rehearsals for Beckett's 1975 production, his assistant Walter Asmus speaks of giving 'shape through repetition, repetition of themes. Not only themes in the script, but also themes of the body'.[134] These 'themes of the body' date back to the first production of *Godot* in 1953, in which the director Roger Blin discussed working out patterns of movement from the physical infirmities of the characters: 'I took as springboard their physical defects, real or implied',[135] and these include Vladimir's constant need to urinate, Estragon's drowsiness, Pozzo's heart trouble, Lucky's palsy. Blin would walk critically with the actors Latour and Raimbourg until each had a stride determined by his malady, in this instance, Estragon's aching feet and Vladimir's prostrate trouble. A style of movement develops from the material presence, the mimetic bodies of the actors.

Klaus Herm's remark of his experience playing F – 'there [before camera] you are reduced as an actor'[136] – further testifies to the negation in *Ghost Trio* of the actor's material body, its conversion into luminous anti-gravitational purity of form. Beckett's cinematic marionette invokes the suppressed agency of the anti-naturalist body of modernist theatre, as well as the mechanized ritual slowness of the modernist film. The movements of F, and the grace and anti-gravitational lightness of Delphine Seyrig in *Marienbad* recalls Maeterlinck's *The Blind Ones,* where '*movements appear grave, slow, apart, and as though spiritualised by the distance and the light*',[137] and the stage direction in Yeats' *At the Hawk's Well,* a play which Beckett admired,[138] states that movement should '*suggest a marionette*'.[139] Beckett belongs to a tradition in modernist theatre and film which seeks to freeze the naturalist gesture and mechanise the body, and which inflects the idea

[132] Harold B. Segel, *Pinocchio's Progeny: Puppets, Marionettes, Automatons, and Robots in Modernist and Avant-Garde Drama* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 108.
[133] Edward Braun, *Meyerhold: A Revolution in Theatre* (London: Methuen, 1995), 129.
[134] Walter Asmus, 'Beckett Directs Godot', *Theatre Quarterly*, 5.19 (1975), 19–26; 23.
[135] Ruby Cohn, *From* Desire *to* Godot (London: University of California Press, 1987), 20.
[136] Interview with Klaus Herm, in Kalb, *Beckett in Performance,* 204.
[137] Maurice Maeterlinck, *The Blind Ones*, trans. Laurence Tadema (London: Allen & Unwin, 1895), 9.
[138] Knowlson, *Damned to Fame,* 374.
[139] W.B. Yeats, *Collected Plays* (London: Macmillan, [1934] 1953), 210. For a comparison of Beckett with Maeterlinck and Yeats, see Katherine Worth, *The Irish Drama of Europe from Yeats to Beckett* (London: Athlone Press, 1978).

that the film actor is 'more radically ignorant of its spectator, since he is not there, than the theatrical spectacle can ever be',[140] with the depersonalized figure, oblivious to its spectator, of the marionette.

Beckett's 'breaking with Stanislavskian methods'[141] places him in a parallel theatrical tradition which seeks to depersonalize the body and divest the actor of motivation and agency. Kleist's essay of 1810 predates the ideas of a tradition which includes Biomechanics, as Eisenstein's explicit reference to Kleist suggests, and also late nineteenth-century Symbolism's advocation of marionettes in favour of actors. Arthur Symons' remarks on Maeterlinck's drama uncannily foreshadow the movement style of F in *Ghost Trio*: 'this theatre of artificial beings, who are at once […] more mechanical than the living actors whom we are accustomed to see […] their grave, regulated motion'.[142] For Maeterlinck, the actor's physical presence, held captive by its own weight, diminishes the impersonal quality of the performance. The view of Symons that 'two people should be able to sit quietly in a room, without ever leaving their chairs, and to hold our attention' fundamentally changed the way Yeats would imagine theatrical bodies. The theatre designer Edward Gordon Craig's theory of the 'Über-Marionette'[143] also belongs to a tendency, shared by Biomechanics, to divest the actor of psychological agency and strive for a self-reflexive formality. Craig held the view that 'art can admit of no accidents', and preferred a style of acting which sought to supplant actors with marionettes, or to alter the style of acting so that actors aspire to the condition of marionettes.[144] The impersonal 'Über-Marionette' frees the stage actor from the accidents and contingencies of the live event.[145] These 'inanimate figures' anticipate the strict determination in Beckett's directions, which, in their meticulous regulation of physical monotony, allow for no accidents. For Gordon Craig, as for Meyerhold and Beckett, the shaping influence of the actor's interiority on 'the actions of the actor's body' obscures rhythmic pattern and formal constructedness.

The figure of F in *Ghost Trio,* in one sense, is the performative counterpoint to the clown-like routines of low grotesquery in *Godot*. Yet these distinctions are rarely clear-cut or mutually exclusive in Beckett. The complex formalist

[140] Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and Cinema,* trans. Celia Britton (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1981), 96.
[141] Uhlmann, 'Expression and Affect in Kleist, Beckett and Deleuze', 69.
[142] Arthur Symons, *Plays, Acting and Music* (London: Constable, 1909), 168.
[143] Edward Gordon Craig, *Craig on Theatre*, ed. J. Michael Walton (London: Methuen, 1983), 5.
[144] Ibid., 84.
[145] Ibid., 82.

patterns and strict determination Beckett introduced to the movement of Vladimir and Estragon in his Schiller production[146] allowed for no 'accidents' in performance, in the tradition of Gordon Craig.[147] Vladimir and Estragon occasionally resemble, as the stage directions indicate, the grotesque body, in imitation of the marionette, '*arms sagging, head sunk, sagging at the knees*' (20). As a director, Beckett would consistently maintain a balance between formalism and material presence. His direction of *Krapp's Last Tape* at the Schiller-Theater emphasized Krapp's debility, but also crystallized formal patterns of movement, preventing either the formal or naturalist elements from assuming a privileged originating force.The Beckett actor is hindered by the infirmity of the body, yet elaborate choreographed arrangements of gesture suggest a similarity with the anti-naturalism of marionette theatre and modernist film.

Beckett's much-quoted distinctions between his work for film and theatre blur in a way which also parallels contemporary French cinema's tendency towards theatricality. The theatricality in Beckett's films is not only *sui generis*, it also bears strong resemblances to a more general tendency in French cinema, particularly as manifest in the work of Marguerite Duras. Having established a reputation as a novelist in the forties and fifties, Marguerite Duras also begins to write for the stage – *Le Square* in 1958, and *Les Viaducs de la Seine-et-Oise* in 1960 – and the screen – *Hiroshima mon amour*. Her films often foreground their literary and theatrical origins; for instance, she rewrote her 1954 short story, *Des journées entières dans les arbres*, for the stage in 1965, and then for the screen in 1976. Extended texts are recited in voiceover, scenes are filmed in frontal, locked-off shots, actors are blocked as though they were on stage. She made nineteen films, and during the seventies her published texts mainly consist of scripts for work she directed.[148] Like Beckett and his experience with *Film*, Duras began to direct her own work after being dissatisfied with adaptations by other directors. Of Peter Brook's film of *Moderato Cantabile* (1960), she remarked, 'The script done with Gerard Jarlot was bad, phony, as was Peter Brook's production'.[149]

In 1964, she co-directed a twenty-five-minute short film, *Nuit noire, Calcutta* with Marin Karmitz; two years later, Beckett would also co-direct his first film, *Comédie,* alongside Karmitz. The film's protagonist in *Nuit noire, Calcutta,* an

[146] McMillan and Fehsenfeld, *Beckett in the Theatre*, 87–163.

[147] Craig, *Craig on Theatre*, 84.

[148] *Jaune le soleil* (1971), *Nathalie Granger* (1972), *La Femme du Gange* (1972), *India Song* (1974), *Des journées entières dans les arbres* (1976), *Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta désert* (1976), *Baxter, Véra Baxter* (1976), *Le Camion* (1977), *Le Navire Night* (1979), the two screen versions of *Aurélia Steiner* (1979), *Agatha et les lectures illimitées* (1981), *L'Homme atlantique* (1981), *Dialogue de Rome* (1982), and *Les Enfants* (1985).

[149] Duras, *Green Eyes*, 39.

alcoholic writer struggling to complete his novel about a vice consul's affair with a woman in Calcutta, speaks a monologue off-screen which bears only an indirect relation to silent images of the writer in Paris at work or observing people in cafes. Duras then writes and directs *Détruire, dit-elle* (1969), a work originally written as a hybrid novel-playtext: 'I had no idea of a film, but I did have the idea of a book – how shall I put it? – of a book that could be either read or acted or filmed.'[150] As Leslie Hill observes, 'some of Duras's best-known works are the result of this process of generic displacement' and 'exist in an uncertain intermediary zone midway between book and theatre, script and performance, page and cinema screen'.[151] Duras called her most famous film, *India Song* (1975), a 'texte théâtre film'. It is based on a 1973 playtext of the same name, which in turn reworks characters and situations from three earlier novels, *Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein* (1964), *Le Vice-consul* (1965) and *L'Amour* (1971); for instance, the film's prologue refers to Michael Richardson's abandonment of Lol V. Stein for Anne-Marie Stretter, as first described in *Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein*. Duras' blurring of generic boundaries is similar to Beckett's own reworking of situations and characters in *Ghost Trio*: he described the first draft as 'All the old ghosts. Godot and Eh Joe over infinity.'[152] The asynchronous voice, the solitary figure, the memory of a woman, recall *Eh Joe,* while the figure of the boy echoes the messenger in *Godot*, as does the situation of unfulfilled waiting. The overhead plan of the set in *Film*, with its pallet, mirror and single window, as designed by Burr Smidt, strongly resembles the design of the room in *Ghost Trio*.

India Song stars two-thirds of the cast of Beckett's film of *Comédie*: Delphine Seyrig (Anne-Marie Stretter) and Michael Lonsdale (the French vice consul of Calcutta), as well as Claude Mann (Michael Richardson). Both Michael Richardson and the vice consul pursue Anne-Marie Stretter, the ambassador's wife, to the French embassy in Calcutta, where the film enacts a variation of the love triangle in *Marienbad* and *Play*. *India Song* is renowned for its radical separation of voice and image. Off-screen voices, either the voices of the characters visible in the image, unseen voices of guests at the embassy or otherwise unidentified speakers, narrate the story while the three main characters move in and out of the frame. The film, as Chion points out, 'appears to deploy only offscreen sound (voices of characters who have left the screen but also the unseen orchestra at the reception ball) and nondiegetic sound (voices speaking in the past tense about

[150] Interview, Marguerite Duras, *Destroy, She Said*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Grove Press, 1970), 92.

[151] Leslie Hill, *Marguerite Duras: Apocalyptic Desires* (London: Routledge, 1993), 93, 85, 10.

[152] Beckett to A.J. Leventhal, Jan. 1976, quoted in Tonning, *Beckett's Abstract Drama*, 175.

the characters we are seeing, the Beethoven piano variation)'.[153] In the occasional moments when we see Seyrig and Lonsdale and hear them speaking, their lips do not move: there is not a single instance in the film of synchronized speech.

Two young off-screen female voices begin their dialogue by speaking of the beggarwoman and the vice consul, and recall the events at the ball, first recounted in *Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein,* surrounding Anne-Marie Stretter and Michael Richardson and Lol V. Stein; the voices speak of the death of Anne-Marie Streeter in the past tense, before Stretter – like the figures in *Marienbad* and *Play*, long since dead – makes her entrance. Identities merge, for instance, between the beggarwoman and Anne-Marie Stretter, across various registers of the seen and the heard and complex layers of timelines in which the here-and-now blurs into the there-and-then. Duras in fact recorded the actors reading the text, then played it back to them during the shoot; the actors, as in *Ghost Trio*, would hear and respond to the voices off-screen. *India Song*, as Gunther points out, 'generates a radical fracture between the voice-off and the body on-screen, making the actors appear like spectres or shadows'.[154] It is a technique which bears comparison with *Ghost Trio*. As Deleuze suggests, 'between the off-screen voice and the pure field of space [in *Ghost Trio*], there is a scission, a line of separation, as in Greek theater, Japanese Noh, or the cinema of the Straubs and Marguerite Duras'. Deleuze's remarks on *Ghost Trio,* that 'it is as if a radio piece and a silent film were being played simultaneously', might also be applied to *India Song*.[155]

In *India Song*, as in *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, the presentness of voice inflects the pastness of image with a nostalgia-effect, the reverse of the nostalgia for the pastness of voice in *Krapp*. In both Beckett and Duras, this profound sense of nostalgia is created through montage of sound and image. By enabling the present and past to co-exist separately and simultaneously, with neither designated as the primary time-frame, the past can be seen to pre-echo the present, while the present arrests and refocuses the past. In *India Song*, the here-and-now of the voices do not quite illustrate or correctly describe the there-and-then of image, and this permits and incites variant versions of the emergent situation. Voice or image is either describing the past – the final weeks of Anne-Marie Stretter – or re-enacting an imaginary version of it. Duras dramatizes this spectral disjunction by staging the ghostly return of theatricality as the counterpart to

[153] Chion, *Film, A Sound Art*, 258.

[154] Gunther, *Marguerite Duras*, 30.

[155] Gilles Deleuze, 'The Exhausted', in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (London: Verso, 1998), 167.

the presentness of voice. The performance style, reminiscent of *Marienbad,* is slow, ritualistic and marionette-like. Characters, as Gabrielle Cody notes, 'walk in and out of frame as though onto a stage'; Duras films in long takes, and aside from the occasional slow pan and tracking shot, minimal camera movement further defines and locates a theatrical space within the frame.

The divorce of speech from gesture in *Ghost Trio* suggests, as in *India Song*, a retrospective, even posthumous relation between V and F. Rather than F responding 'live' to V's instructions, F's performance, like Anne-Marie Stretter's, could belong to the already long since enacted (and recorded) past. In one respect, the film stages, as in *India Song*, a missed encounter: V *anticipates* (rather than directs) the ghostly (because already recorded and observed) movements of F and the camera. The montage of sound and image in both films enables this ambiguous reversibility of present and past. In *India Song*, the voices shift from past to present, giving the image a dual status, a nostalgia and a liveness, as in the opening sequence where we see Stretter dancing with Michael Richardson: 'They were dancing. They are dancing.' The source of the music, a mix of 1930s dance music and Beethoven's 'Diabelli Variations', could belong either to the space of the voice, or the off-screen space of the image; in *Ghost Trio*, the music, Beethoven's 'Ghost Trio', appears to emanate from the cassette player, but it could belong to V's space, to which F again responds. The reversibility of present and past is spatialized in both through mirror-effects. In *Ghost Trio*, the rectangular floor, wall, door, pallet and window each mirror one another. In *India Song,* Stretter appears for the first time, and recurrently throughout the film, as a reflection in a large wall mirror in the salon. These scenes are filmed from a fixed position, and are framed so as to ambiguate Stretter's 'presence' and the 'absence' of her reflection, both caught in the 'double rectangle'[156] of mirror and screen, just as the sound-image montage reflects, doubles and reverses present and past.

The dance scene in *India Song* re-stages and transposes the central scene in *Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein,* the ball at S.Thala. Offscreen voices in the film cite passages from the novel which pivot around the scene at the ball, where Michael Richardson abandoned Lol V. Stein for Anne-Marie Stretter. As Deleuze puts it: 'characters who keep their mouths closed even when they are speaking from the other side, so that what they say is already in the perfect tense while place and event, the dance at the embassy, are the dead layer that covers up an old burning stratum, the other dance in another place'.[157] The dance in 'another place' is the enigmatic, traumatic scene in the novel, as witnessed

[156] Gabrielle Cody, *Impossible Performances: Duras as Dramatist* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2000), 86.
[157] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 256.

by Lol V. Stein who replays the scene endlessly in her head. In the novel, she returns to the space of the ball years later, with 'the task of reconstructing that moment';[158] she then re-enacts the traumatic event by becoming a voyeur in a love triangle between her friend, Tatiana and her lover, Jacques Hold, enabling her both to be present – substituting the past event for the present, Tatiana for herself – and absent, a mere witness: 'She sees herself in the same place, at the end, always, in the center of a triangular construction.'[159] Lol seeks to arrest the passing of time, to freeze the traumatic scene into a mythical present: 'What Lol would have liked would have been to have the ball immured.'[160] By re-enacting, as a witness, the scene in the present, she relives and keeps alive the originary traumatic moment when Anne-Marie Stretter replaced her in Michael Richardson's affections.

As Elizabeth Lyon puts it, Lol is obsessed with 'shap[ing] the story into a fantasy of looking' in order to fulfil her 'desire to see loss', which takes the form of a desire 'to see herself not being there'.[161] Structurally, the story partly resembles the sequence of characters watching each other in the book and film of *Détruire, dit-elle*: 'someone is watching the tennis court and is watched by someone else, who in turn is observed by a third party, and the narrator, or whatever plays a narrative role, more or less takes up these stories and sees what these watching eyes see'.[162] The repetition compulsion and the split female subject, obsessively re-enacting the scene of separation in the Lol V. Stein cycle, also recalls the French woman in *Hiroshima Mon Amour,* who becomes, as Judith Mayne puts it, 'both the central focus of the narrative and an observer who witnesses flashes from her past as a film over which she has no control'.[163] At the ball at S. Thala, substituted by Anne-Marie Stretter, Lol becomes a witness to her own absence from the scene; this fantasy of 'seeing herself not being there',[164] as Lyon puts it, is then repeated throughout the novel in explicitly cinematic terms – 'the eternity of the ball in the cinema of Lol Stein'[165] – before it travels over to *India Song*.

Her return as a ghostly disembodied camera eye in *India Song,* observing her own absence, is already foreshadowed in the novel, in the cinematic aspect of her

[158] Marguerite Duras, *The Ravishing of Lol Stein*, trans. Richard Seaver (New York: Pantheon Book, 1986), 37.
[159] Ibid., 37.
[160] Ibid., 39.
[161] Elizabeth Lyon, 'The Cinema of Lol V. Stein', in *Feminism and Film Theory* (London: Routledge, 1988), 245.
[162] Interview, *Destroy, She Said*, 94.
[163] Quoted in Marilyn R. Schuster, *Marguerite Duras Revisited* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993), 69.
[164] Elizabeth Lyon, 'The Cinema of Lol V. Stein', 245.
[165] Duras, *The Ravishing of Lol Stein,* 39.

re-enactments, where she seeks to 'pinpoint each second, arrest its movement'; a dress is divested in 'slow-motion'; characters are frequently seen coming out of the cinema; a scene with Tatiana intensifies into 'an overexposed image'.[166] In *India Song*, Lol's spectral gaze returns as the absent presence, the camera eye observing Anne-Marie Stretter and Michael Richardson as they dance. Duras interlaces the already narrated aspects of the voiceover telling the earlier story of Lol V. Stein and the present tense of the mise-en-scène, visible through the disembodied perspective of the camera which is at once present in the scene as a witness and excluded from it.

After *Ghost Trio*, Beckett returned to theatre with parallel German and English productions of *Footfalls*, which he published in 1976, and directed, in English and German, later that year, with Billie Whitelaw at the Royal Court Theatre in London, and shortly afterwards, Hildegard Schmahl at the Schiller-Theater, Berlin. *Footfalls* bears comparison with Duras' technique of asynchronous voiceover, indeterminate temporal and spatial schemes and interlaced presence-absence effects, in a way which transforms, as Paul Sheehan argues, 'the resolutely presence-based medium that the theatre is often taken to be into something more easily graspable through film or television: a theatre of shadows, traces, impressions and phantoms'.[167] Other Beckett scholars have also remarked on the cinematic aspects of *Footfalls*: Anna McMullan notes that 'there are also parallels between the late television drama and the late theatre: the ghostly figures, the darkness surrounding the figure or face, the separation of body and voice';[168] for Stanton Garner, the play's reduced depth of field creates a 'frontality of visual field' which approximates a two-dimensional screen[169]; for Gontarski, 'Beckett's formative conception of *Footfalls* was cinematic, a visual image of that pacing woman "revolving it all" '.[170]

As Beckett remarked to Hildegard Schmahl, 'The walking up and down is the central image, the text, the words were only built up around this picture'. It is the equivalent of the recurring dance sequence in *India Song* and *Le Ravissment*. As Gontarski has shown, Beckett began with the image of May pacing up and down, then added the voice of the mother. The split between image and voiceover suggests either an offstage voice, or a voice from May's mind; the narration of

[166] Ibid, 106.

[167] Paul Sheehan, 'Beckett's Ghost Dramas: Monitoring a Phenomenology of Sleep', in eds Ulrika Maude and Matthew Feldman, *Beckett and Phenomenology* (New York: Continuum, 2009), 159.

[168] Anna McMullan, *Performing Embodiment in Samuel Beckett* (London: Routledge, 2007), 107.

[169] Ibid., 107.

[170] Gontarski, *Intent of Undoing,* 169.

a past event as voiceover, as in *India Song,* ghosts the visible body and renders uncertain the presence of May, the only character we see on stage. As with *India Song* and *Le Ravissment*, narration of events in the past allows the present tense stage space or image to coalesce with the spaces described by the narrating voice. The play's strict separation of voice and image, as in Duras, ambiguates the relations between present and past, and of presence and absence. May in *Footfalls* 'must hear the feet however faint they fall' (401) in order to convince herself she exists; the pacing attests to her physical presence, and this is set against the impalpability of her voice, which is 'not there'. Beckett ambiguously stressed both physical presence and imperceptibility – he told Billie Whitelaw that May is 'not quite there' – and yet her pacing attests to her physical presence, 'she must hear the feet'. The mother's tales revolve around the absence of the daughter; with cumulative emphasis, timed to the back and forth pacing, mother and daughter echo 'not there' (403) to the daughter's claim of absence at the evening service. It is not possible to say with any certainty whether the mother's voice is heard within May's field of memory, or whether May's body is conjured by the mother's voice, just as in *Ghost Trio* and *India Song,* it is not possible to determine whether the image precedes the voice, or whether the voice speaks first to summon the image.

As Beckett described the story to Schmahl, 'Roughly it's in three parts, first the daughter talking to a sick mother, then the mother talking to the daughter who is not really there. Then the daughter talking about a memory of another mother and daughter, and she's just telling of her memories of the mother and daughter.'[171] As Anna McMullan argues,

> the voice posits itself as if it were a body (or ghost) walking. Spectators are offered conflicting perspectives, as the voice invites us to observe May, yet haunts us with the possibility that it may be a projected 'other' or alternative mode of apparition to the visual 'semblance' of the pacing figure: voice and semblance seem to be generating each other.[172]

The opening scene, the dialogue between May and V, the voice of her mother, plays out the originary traumatic scene, May 'revolving' in her mind the last days of her dying mother, which is then displaced and translated into the narration of sections two and three. Beckett's ghostly figures may or may not be traumatized remembering bodies or exist in mysterious ghostly afterlives. On the one hand, May's refusal of identification with the narrative present and

[171] Ibid., 172.
[172] McMullan, *Performing Embodiment*, 111.

narrated past, speaking her life as though lived by another, together with her constant reliving of her mother's last days, displays the symptoms of trauma. As Cathy Caruth describes the victim of trauma, 'there is a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming events or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviours stemming from the event'. To be traumatized is 'to be possessed by an image or an event';[173] for Lol V. Stein, this event is the loss of Michael Richardson to Anne-Marie Stretter, while in May's case, it is the death of her mother. The dead, according to Freud's theory of melancholia, not only haunt the subject but also possess and become it. The formal patterns in which May and the mother seem to speak with the same voice are possibly a form of identification for the ego with its abandoned object: 'one must sense the similarities of both narratives. Not so much from the text as from the style, from the way the text is spoken'.[174] May should move her lips twice during the mother's text, murmuring to herself that 'she has not been out since girlhood' and also at the mother's reluctance to use the word 'born' (341). Abraham and Torok argue that instead of the dead being 'introjected' in symbolic form, as legitimate memories, for example, they are rather 'incorporated into the body by the more physically oral phantasy that incorporation implies'.[175]

Yet Beckett suggested to Billie Whitelaw to play it 'like one ghost speaking to another',[176] and this brings to mind Yeatsian purgatorial punishment, as for instance the spirit of Swift in *Words Upon the Window Pane,* condemned to tread the same path over and over, endlessly rehearsing and replaying the unresolved traumatic event. In *Ghost Trio,* the 'slow faltering walk' 'makes no sound';[177] Beckett also specified that the 'exits and entrances' in *Come and Go* should be 'slow, without sound of feet' (211). Previously the sound of feet were what grounded a figure in the physical world; the absence of sound echoes the deceased Stretter's soundlessly graceful footfalls in *India Song*, and the 'silent rooms' inhabited by 'nameless phantoms', and 'servants who were […] doubtless long dead', in *Marienbad*, where 'one's footsteps are absorbed by carpets so thick, so heavy that no sound reaches one's ear'.[178]

[173] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 4–5.
[174] Asmus, 'Beckett Directs Godot', 338.
[175] Phil Baker, *Beckett and the Mythology of Psychoanalysis* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 154.
[176] Quoted in Rosemary Poutney, *Theatre of Shadows: Samuel Beckett's Drama 1956–76* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1988), 60.
[177] MS 1519/1, Beckett International Foundation: Reading University Library.
[178] Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Last Year At Marienbad: A Ciné-Novel*, trans. Richard Howard (London: John Calder, 1962), 18.

In the second section, narrated by V, we see May pacing up and down while V, referring to herself in the first person, describes performing the same action in the old home: 'I walk here now.' Subject positions, past and present, imaginary and real space blur into one another, as the scene summons either May or V pacing in the old home. In this section, while it is V who speaks, she describes herself as though she were May, as well as referring to May in the third person: 'But let us watch her move, in silence' (401). May and V double up, replace and substitute for one another, in a manner which resembles the traumatic replacement and substitution of Lol V. Stein witnessing her own absence. Like Lol, May 'was not there'. In the opening section, in the dialogue between them, V plays both May and the mother; in the second section, V speaks of herself pacing elsewhere, yet it is May that we see pacing on stage. Characters and their witnesses merge and exchange roles, generating 'a complex network of identifications where the positions of subject and other are interdependent and reciprocal'.[179] The method recalls *India Song*, where Duras creates 'a split feminine identification between her ghosted female protagonist and another woman who is never seen, only heard […] the recurring figure of a leprous beggar woman from Savannakhet, impassively peering into Stretter's languorous world'.[180] As with *Détruire, dit-elle*, as Duras puts it,

> there is a gliding from one character to another. Why? I think it's because they're all the same. These […] characters, I believe, are completely interchangeable. So I went about things in such a way that the camera is never conclusive as regards the way one of them acts or the words that another pronounces […] What either of the men says could also be said by the other.[181]

In the third section of *Footfalls*, narrated by May, the figure of the ghost-like Amy, pacing up and down the transept of a church – 'Soon then after she was gone, as though never there, began to walk, up and down, up and down, that poor arm' (402) – parallels the image of the figure pacing on stage, and in the old home as narrated by V. Amy could be a younger version of May, and the dialogue between Amy and Mrs Winter echoes the exchange between May and V; as Enoch Brater notes, 'the "poor mind" of act 1 becomes the "poor head" of act 2 and finally "His poor arm" and "that poor arm" of May's sequel'.[182] Images, both visible and unseen, reverberate across the three sections, ambiguating perceptions of past and present, the real and the imagined; the diegetic figure we

[179] McMullan, *Performing Embodiment*, 120.
[180] Cody, *Impossible Performances*, 84.
[181] Interview, *Destroy, She Said*, 96.
[182] Brater, *Beyond Minimalism*, 59.

see pacing on stage melds into the non-diegetic figures in the second and third sections. The effect bears comparison with *India Song* and the 'indeterminacy of the borderline that separates the two acousmatic spaces, the offscreen (related to the present image and present time) and the nondiegetic'. As Chion argues, there is no way of telling if the acousmatic voices are speaking 'in the present and merely offscreen or if they belong to another time and are nondiegetic, nor can we tell if the voices are present at the reception, for example, or if they are already elsewhere'.[183] In this respect, it is a multi-layered, cinematic acousmêtre which fundamentally animates the radical dissociation between unseen voice and visible body in *Footfalls,* undermining the presence of the actor's embodiment, eliminating distinctions between the real and fantasmatic, past and present, speaker and subject.

[183] Chion, *Film, A Sound Art*, 258.

4

Photogénie, the Close-Up, Gender Performance

Beckett wrote … *but the clouds* … between October and November 1976 as a replacement for the BBC's filmed adaptation of *Play,* which he found very unsatisfactory: 'Have submitted a new TV piece to BBC to replace their very poor film of Play.'[1] The production at Ealing Film Studios, broadcast on 17 April 1977, brought together the 'same team as for Ghost Trio'[2]: Donald McWhinnie directed Ronald Pickup as both M and his younger self, M1, and Billie Whitelaw, in luminous close-up, as W. Beckett maintained a close directorial involvement in the production; a few months later, he directed the film in German for SDR, making minor alterations to the text and including a longer passage from Yeats' *The Tower* in the film's closing moments. Beckett had established a dedicated team in Germany, and the ease he felt at SDR – 'there you felt that everyone was personally involved' – contributed to his view, as he told Linda Ben-Zvi in 1988, that television film had become his favourite medium;[3] although in my argument, it is the presence of Billie Whitelaw in the BBC version, and the film's lyrical allegory of Beckett and Whitelaw's intense and long-standing collaboration, which is of central importance to the film's cinematic qualities.

Originally titled *Poetry Only Love*, the film conveys, as Beckett puts it, the 'same mood as G. T. [Ghost Trio]' and the two films share similar elements. A solitary man inhabits his 'sanctum', awaiting the appearance of a female figure, while a voiceover directs his action. Here, the man's own voice, V, directs a past version of himself in a series of precise geometric movements: he comes home, 'having walked the roads since break of day' (419), enters from the shadows to

[1] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 18 November 1976, Maurice Harmon, ed., *No Author Better Served: The Correspondence of Samuel Beckett and Alan Schneider* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 347.

[2] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 27 December 1976, ibid., 352.

[3] Linda Ben-Zvi, in a conversation with Gaby Hartel, New York, February 1990, Gaby Hartel, Klaus Völker and Thomas Irmer, 'The Reception of Beckett's Theatre and Television Pieces in West and East Germany', in eds Mark Nixon and Matthew Feldman, *The International Reception of Samuel Beckett* (London: Continuum, 2009), 75.

the left into a small circle of light, exits to the right, sheds his greatcoat and puts on his night robe, enters from the right into the light and exits to his 'sanctum' in the north shadow; here, bowed over his table, in faint grey light, he struggles to recall the face of an absent female figure: 'I began to beg of her, to appear, to me' (420). As with *Ghost Trio*, the absent figure the man longs to appear may be a lost love or a muse-like figure who may or may not be dead; in … *but the clouds* … M makes her probable death more explicit: 'unseeing eyes I so begged when alive to look at me' (420). The face of W, in extreme close-up, appears eight times in a slow dissolve during the course of his narrative. Each time 'it was always night' (419), although M differentiates three distinct categories of appearance: in the first, 'she appeared and […] in the same breath was gone' (420); secondly, 'she appeared and […] lingered [for "*5 seconds*"]' (420), and finally, '*uttering inaudibly*' (421) a line from Yeats' *The Tower*: '… clouds … but the clouds … of the sky …' (421). In each case, M apparently summons her face at will, although he also describes a fourth case, 'by far the commonest' (421), when he begs of her to appear in vain. Even when she does appear, it is only for seconds at a time, and distantly, as an abstract discarnate image. M cannot make her 'look at me' or 'speak to me' (421). Towards the end, she appears again, her lips again silently mouthing the lines from Yeats, while M ventriloquises the lines in synchronized speech, animating her unheard lines with his own voice: '… but the clouds of the sky … when the horizon fades … or a bird's sleepy cry … among the deepening shades' (422).

As Gontarski notes, 'it is evident from the earliest drafts that this will be Beckett's most cinematic work'.[4] Ronald Pickup described the experience as 'more like making a real film'.[5] The centrality of the close-up of W, the use of dissolves and superimpositions to signal the operations of memory, the separation of M from his own voice, V, and the ventriloquised voiceover of W's silent utterance, which complicates the relation between the presence of M and the absence of W, situate the film, I will argue, both in the early period of silent filmmaking and theory, and second wave modernism's ghost-like re-animation of silent film techniques. The film's deep sense of nostalgia and longing, I suggest, is formalized in the film's employment of techniques, such as the use of dissolves and superimpositions, or the close-up of a face mouthing inaudible lines, which had become obsolete, or much less prevalent in contemporary filmmaking practice. As Gaby Hartel points out, the importance of the close-up 'demonstrates

[4] S.E. Gontarski, *Intent of Undoing in Samuel Beckett's Dramatic Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 126.

[5] James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), 635.

Beckett's indebtedness to early film practice and theory' as expressed in writers such as Arnheim and Béla Balázs.[6] Hartel suggests the importance of German Expressionist cinema to Beckett's television films in general;[7] Ulrika Maude also notes that the TV films bear 'striking affinities with German Expressionist films of the 1920s and 1930s, which repeatedly and obsessively stage the "absent present" quality of somnambulism and night terror'.[8] In my view, the stylistic affinities of … *but the clouds* … are much closer to French impressionist silent film; … *but the clouds* …, I argue, thematizes its regret for lost love by harking back to a lost style of filmmaking crystallized in the practice and theory of the first avant-garde movement in cinema.

Between 1919 and 1928, the French impressionists pioneered certain methods and techniques which enabled cinema to express a Proustian logic of narrative. In the films of Abel Gance, Germaine Dulac, Marcel L'Herbier and Jean Epstein, interiority and the process of memory frequently efface the narration of physical events, and memory-images assume visual form as 'an alternative dimension of physical reality'.[9] As David Bordwell points out, 'flashbacks, memory-images, and fantasies give us the temporal pattern of a character's thoughts'; the impressionists developed a repertoire of formal patterns and optical devices, including rhythmic, subjective editing, composite images, extended dissolves and superimpositions, lens distortions and gauze focus – Beckett had experimented with this technique in *Film* and did so again for the German film of *What Where* in 1988 – to energize and instigate film's capacity to slow down or accelerate narrative time in accordance with the speed of thought, to momentarily arrest and re-focus a single recurring memory-image. In films such as Man Ray's *Étoile De Mer* (1918), Gance's *La Roue* (1919) and Dulac's *La souriante Madame Beudet* (1923) – Beckett had staged the play on which the film was based in 1931 at a Trinity College, Dublin, Modern Languages Society event – the continual flux of these fantasies and affective states often articulates an obsessive romantic nostalgia, longing or regret for an absent or lost love. The memory-images of impressionism, dissolving the narrative space around them into vivid indistinctness, staged as apparitions in close-up in a style of self-

[6] Hartel, Völker and Irmer, 'The Reception of Beckett's Theatre and Television Pieces in West and East Germany', 77.

[7] Gaby Hartel, 'No stone unturned. Beckett sucht und findet Anregungen im frühen deutschen Film' (2005), quoted in *The International Reception of Samuel Beckett*, 81.

[8] Ulrika Maude, 'Somnambulism, Amnesia and Fugue: Beckett and (Male) Hysteria', in eds Peter Fifield and David Addyman, *Samuel Beckett: Debts and Legacies: New Critical Essays* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 165.

[9] András Bálint Kovács, *Screening Modernism: European Art Cinema 1950–1980* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 19.

conscious pictorialism or 'photogénie', strikingly resemble the formal strategies of … *but the clouds* … In this respect, the nostalgia for W is defined and enhanced by the film's nostalgia for these long-since-vanished cinematic techniques.

The impressionists played a central role in establishing the modernist film culture of the twenties, and one of its most important figures, as practitioner and theorist, was Jean Epstein. Beckett mentions seeing Epstein's *Finis Terrae* (1929) in a 1934 letter to Nuala Costello.[10] Between 1923 and 1929, Epstein directed twenty fiction films, including adaptations of Balzac's *L'Auberge rouge* (1923), George Sand's *Mauprat* (1926) and Paul Morand's *La Glace à trois faces* (1927) – 'a precursor to *Last Year at Marienbad*',[11] according to Richard Roud, with whom Beckett corresponded several times – Edgar Allen Poe's *La Chute de la maison Usher* (1928), *Coeur Fidèle* (1923) and *Finis Terrae* (1929), which is, according to Wall-Romana, 'among his undisputed masterpieces'.[12] He was also a significant film writer and theorist. Epstein wrote his first book, *Bonjour Cinéma* (1921), at a time when French film criticism and theory was beginning to emerge in journals or little magazines for avant-garde cineastes; according to Wall-Romana, it is 'one of the first books that may truly be considered to develop a new theoretical view of cinema as informed equally by modernism […] and by the sense that a new syntax of cinematography, mise en scène, narrative rhythm and editing was now available'.[13] T.S. Eliot mentions it in his 'The Metaphysical Poets' (1921): 'The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning. (A brilliant and extreme statement of this view, with which it is not requisite to associate oneself, is that of M. Jean Epstein, La Poesie d'aujourd'hui).'[14]

Jean Vigo's *L'Atalante* (1934) – which Beckett saw in 1964[15] – is indebted to Epstein's *La Belle Nivernaise* (1924), and when Hitchcock discussed the genealogy of his method of cinematic suspense, he pointed to Epstein's *La Chute de la maison Usher* (1928). Yet despite his influence on both the avant-garde and Hollywood traditions, Epstein remained largely overlooked until his death in 1953, when Henri Langlois organized a retrospective homage at the Cannes

[10] Beckett to Nuala Costello, 10 May 1934, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, vol. 1: 1929–1940*, eds Martha Fehsenfeld and Lois More Overbeck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 207.

[11] Richard Roud, *A Passion for Films: Henri Langlois and the Cinémathèque Française* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1983), 74.

[12] Christophe Wall-Romana, *Jean Epstein: Corporeal Cinema and Film Philosophy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 8.

[13] Ibid., 159.

[14] T.S. Eliot, 'The Metaphysical Poets', in ed. Frank Kermode, *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), 59–67, 65.

[15] Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, 524.

Film Festival. *Cahiers du Cinéma* dedicated a special issue to Epstein that same year and this helped to inaugurate a revival of interest in his work amongst filmmakers including Resnais, Chris Marker and Agnes Varda. Godard's *Histoire(s) du Cinéma* (1988) acknowledges the importance of Epstein in the lines he quotes from *Bonjour Cinéma* while describing his aesthetic as 'obsolete'.[16] It is precisely this sense of an aesthetic momentarily revived from obsolescence which enhances, in my view, the nostalgia effect in … *but the clouds* …

As Graley Herren notes, 'Beckett's key technical innovation in … *but the clouds* … is his adoption of dissolve edits to connect fixed shots'.[17] The dissolve, where one shot slowly fades in, as the previous shot fades out in superimposition, enables the present-tense figure of M to overlap with the figure from the past, M1, and the fantasy or memory-image of W's face in close-up. It is a technique which foregrounds the simultaneity of past, present and imaginary time-lines, and emphasizes the fragility of the memory-image of W as he tries to possess or hold onto her image, only for the image to linger and then fade away. The technique is exemplified in key scenes in Epstein's *Coeur Fidèle* (1923) and *La Chute de la maison Usher* (1928). In *Coeur Fidèle,* a love triangle melodrama set in the docks of Marseilles, Maria, a young barmaid in love with a local dock worker, Jean, desperately attempts to escape an unhappy relationship with her boorish and violent partner, Petit-Paul. The unremarkable plot serves as a pretext for Epstein's experimental techniques, the kinds of optical effects Godard described as 'obsolete', particularly the frequent use of dissolves and superimpositions to suggest the subjective attitude of the characters. Marie's face in close-up slowly dissolves to a shot of a boat dumping waste materials into the sea: we see her face, superimposed over floating detritus, signalling the sense she has of the sordid reality of her situation. In another scene, Jean longs to see Marie again: her face appears, again in close-up as a slow dissolve, and is held in lyrical superimposition for two minutes over an image of the sea. In *La Chute de la maison Usher,* Roderick Usher, madly obsessed with the image of his wife Madeleine while painting her portrait, watches in horror as her portrait comes alive while Madeleine mysteriously falls ill and dies; multiple superimpositions of her self-consciously pictorialized face as she dies assert the death-like power of her likeness. The film's sense of the morbid power of the dead image over the living person or model resembles Poe's *The Oval Portrait*, as quoted by Godard over images of Anna Karina in *Vivre Sa Vie*. Roderick's morbid attempt to possess his wife through her likeness, which leads to

[16] Wall-Romana, *Jean Epstein*, 177.

[17] Graley Herren, *Samuel Beckett's Plays on Film and Television* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 101.

her death and then his desperate attempts to bring her back to life, resonates with formal and thematic concerns in … *but the clouds …*: M begs for W to return to life, to 'look at me', 'speak to me' (421), though he can only ever summon the sad consolation of a mere representation, the dead image of her face.

Epstein was the chief theorist of the 'photogénic' close-up, one of the most influential and enduring techniques of French impressionism. For Epstein, 'photogénie' occurs when narrative continuity is disrupted by a revelatory, mysterious image which transcends the mere mechanical reproduction of the film's action, revealing hidden aspects of the character's consciousness and transforming the narrative in light of that interiority. It is linked self-consciously to the cinematic apparatus, 'to the movement either of the filmed object, of the camera, or of the light',[18] but it also effaces the apparatus in its lyrical or transcendent power. As Mary Ann Doane notes, 'the close-up is the privileged site for this experience of photogénie': the close-up, Epstein claims, is 'cinema's soul'.[19] The photogénic close-up, as Deleuze puts it, displays an 'inherent separability or isolation, a "for-itself" that inevitably escapes, to some degree, the tactics of continuity editing that strive to make it "whole" again'.[20] By filling the expanse of the screen, it abolishes the space around it; it is often, as Epstein argues, 'brief' – it may linger and then disappear, as in … *but the clouds …* – 'for photogénie is a value of the order of the second'.[21] What matters is the scale of the facial close-up, and the way it brings the audience, and the character who imagines or sees it, in close proximity to the face: 'I will never find the way to say how I love American close-ups. Point blank. A head suddenly appears on screen and drama, now face-to-face, seems to address me personally and swells with an extraordinary intensity. I am hypnotized.'[22] For Epstein, the photogénic close-up is caught up with embodied affect and what he calls 'logarithmes sensoriels' ['sensorial logarithms'];[23] it mimes face-to-face contact, simulating the return of the onlooker's gaze and connecting vision to the body, an interface which 'provides a kind of virtual embodiment for the viewer'.[24] Beckett mobilizes the lyrical power of the close-up, its capacity to abolish time and space in a transcendent moment of recognition while diminishing its capacity to validate

[18] Wall-Romana, *Jean Epstein*, 29.
[19] Richard Abel, *French Film Theory and Criticism, 1907–1939*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 236.
[20] Quoted in Mary Ann Doane, 'The Close-Up: Scale and Detail in the Cinema', *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 14.3 (2003): 89–111, 107.
[21] Abel, *French Film Theory and Criticism*, 236.
[22] Jean Epstein, 'Magnification and Other Writings', trans. Stuart Liebman, *October* 3 (1977), 9–25; 9.
[23] Wall-Romana, *Jean Epstein*, 27.
[24] Ibid., 28.

the gaze of the onlooker. W's gaze is overtly unanswerable and directed at no one; as M puts it, the face does not 'look at me', or 'speak to me' (421). The film short-circuits the capacity of the face's visual proximity to signify embodied closeness; it remains abstracted and unattainable. Its affective intensity is reified as distant spectacle, a ghost-like image as an end in itself.

As Wall-Romana argues, photogénie melds together 'the filmic with the pro-filmic'.[25] The 'pro-filmic' is a general term which defines all aspects of the image which are supplementary to the diegesis, and which heighten the aesthetic or emotional effect. This would include the persona of the actor as it has been established in other films, or the particular relations between the director and the actor. In this respect, the presence of Billie Whitelaw is central to the pro-filmic effect. Beckett had previously written *Not I* with Billie Whitelaw's voice in mind. In her account: 'he had for some reason carried the sound of my voice around in his head – not my normal voice, but the voice I used in *Play*. Apparently, when he wrote *Not I*, that was the voice he heard.'[26] Just as he had her voice in mind for *Not I*, so did he have her face in mind when he wrote … *but the clouds* …. According to James Knowlson, her face was 'already in Beckett's head, for he asked Jocelyn Herbert to obtain copies of John Haynes' photographs of the two of them together at rehearsal'.[27] From their first collaboration on *Play* in 1964 to their final work together on Walter Asmus' productions of *Eh Joe, Footfalls* and *Rockaby,* Beckett and Whitelaw developed the closest working relationship he had with any of his actors. As Beckett put it, 'she has an uncanny rapport with my theatre and sense of its requirements'.[28] For Whitelaw,

> when all is said and done, the director I felt most in harmony with was Beckett himself. In the end we almost became like one unit. I wanted what he wanted, and what he wanted from a play was never in any way in opposition to me. For me, our working relationship has remained unique. We worked in harness and harmony for a quarter of a century.[29]

Her account of their rehearsals, where they developed 'a kind of shorthand',[30] is characterized by an instinctive mutual understanding – 'Silences never worried Beckett, and they never worried me',[31] – precision – 'Billie, will you bring your pencil over here and look at page 2, speech 4, fifth word. Will you

[25] Ibid., 26.
[26] Billie Whitelaw, *Billie Whitelaw … Who He?* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1995), 118.
[27] Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, 634.
[28] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 9 February 1982, Harmon, *No Author Better Served*, 423.
[29] Whitelaw, *Who He?*, 218.
[30] Ibid., 119.
[31] Ibid., 77.

make those three dots, two dots'[32] – and harmony: 'we "conducted" each other, eyeball to eyeball, his face changing expression with each phrase, just like a conductor'.[33] According to Whitelaw's accounts of the making of *Ghost Trio* and … *but the clouds* …, Beckett was entirely at ease working with her and the rest of the crew: 'Sam looked so much better than when I'd first met him for *Play* in 1964, a dozen years previously. He was at ease, we were all at ease with each other […] Sam knew that this time he wasn't going to be asked to leave, as happened so frequently in the theatre.'[34] Beckett was working in a medium which allowed him a level of meticulous control unavailable in theatre, and with his favourite actor, who by this stage had become a muse-like figure for him. The central importance of Billie Whitelaw to the film is emphasized in the differences between the BBC and SDR versions; whereas the SDR film ends with an image of M in his sanctum reciting the lines from *The Tower,* the BBC version ends with the image of Whitelaw as W, miming the lines spoken by M. As Graley Herren notes, Whitelaw was 'at least as important to Beckett as Maud Gonne was for Yeats'.[35] The passage from Yeats' *The Tower* encourages a reading of the significance of Whitelaw's muse-like presence; this significance is heightened, in my account, by re-thinking the Yeatsian aspect in terms of the relation between (film) director and actor. I will then extend this line of argument by showing how Beckett undermines and critiques the straightforward Yeatsian relation between artist and female muse, in light of a reading of … *but the clouds* … alongside pro-filmic director-actor relations in formally and thematically comparable films.

According to James Knowlson, Beckett showed him the close-up of Whitelaw through the camera's viewfinder, while on the set of … *but the clouds* …; Knowlson remarked: 'She's very beautiful', to which Beckett replied: 'It's not just beauty, it's the light of the spirit.'[36] The religious aspect in the film – W appears as an apparition from beyond the grave, M venerates her face from his 'sanctum' – echoes Roland Barthes' description of the face of Greta Garbo: 'The name given to [Garbo], The Divine, probably aimed to convey less a superlative state of beauty than the essence of her corporeal person, descended from a heaven where all things are formed and perfected in the clearest light.'[37] Garbo's face exemplified the studio-era style of Hollywood portraiture, where three-point

[32] Ibid., 77.
[33] Ibid., 127.
[34] Ibid., 228.
[35] Herren, *Samuel Beckett's Plays*, 99.
[36] Conversation with James Knowlson.
[37] Barthes, 'The Face of Garbo', in trans. Annette Lavers, *Mythologies* (London: Palladin, 1972), 56.

lighting and soft focus lines contrived to make the actor appear 'beyond human, as intangible as light'.[38] For Barthes,

> Garbo still belongs to that moment in cinema when capturing the human face still plunged audiences into the deepest ecstasy, when one literally lost oneself in a human image as one would in a philtre, when the face represented a kind of absolute state of the flesh, which could be neither reached nor renounced. A few years earlier the face of Valentino was causing suicides; that of Garbo still partakes of the same rule of Courtly Love, where the flesh gives rise to mystical feelings of perdition.[39]

Roland Barthes identifies a particular quality of impersonal otherworldliness in the aloofness and intangibility of Garbo's mask-like face. In *Close Up*, H.D. gives an account of Garbo's performance style in Pabst's *Joyless St* (1924), describing a 'chiselled purity' and a 'dazzling, almost unearthly beauty'; she is not so much a personality but a 'symbol […] a glorified embodiment'.[40] Rudolph Arnheim discusses Garbo in similar terms in *Film*,[41] which Beckett read in 1936; Beckett was clearly familiar with her films from the thirties: planning an evening in London, and having to choose between 'Otway's Soldier's Fortune, T.S.E.'s Sweeney & the Ballets Jooss and a new Garbo Karenina', Beckett expresses a preference for *Anna Karenina* (1935): 'Perhaps the last might be managed'.[42]

Of all Garbo's films, Whitelaw's close-up in … *but the clouds* … most resembles the final shot in Rouben Mamoulian's *Queen Christina* (1933): having forsaken her throne to marry her lover, who is then shot dead in a duel, the final shot tracks into an extreme close-up of Garbo's face, which is held for twenty seconds. In order to achieve the effect of an inscrutable blankness, Mamoulian asked her not to blink and to express 'Nothing. Absolutely nothing. You must make your mind and your heart a complete blank. Make your face into a mask.'[43] Beckett clearly intended a similar effect, as Whitelaw recalls: 'Sam insisted: "I don't want you to blink at all. Just keep your eyes open"'.[44] Garbo's deliberately affectless expression, as with Whitelaw's, is a blank screen absorbing loss, regret and veneration. Elsewhere in *Queen Christina,* and in other Garbo films such as

[38] Judith Brown, *Glamour in Six Dimensions: Modernism and the Radiance of Form* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 102.
[39] Barthes, 'The Face of Garbo', 56.
[40] H. D. 'Garbo/Helen: The Self-Projection of Beauty', in eds James Donald and Anne Friedberg, *Close Up, 1927–1933: Cinema and Modernism* (London: Cassell, 1998), 145, 108.
[41] Rudolph Arnheim, *Film*, trans. L.M. Skieveking and Ian F.D. Morrow (London: Faber and Faber, 1933), 182–185.
[42] Beckett to Thomas McGreevy, 8 October 1935, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 1, 284.
[43] Brown, *Glamour in Six Dimensions*, 110.
[44] Whitelaw, *Who He?*, 228.

Mata Hari (1931) and *The Temptress* (1926), this effect of veneration is staged in acts of courtly love by Garbo's suitors, where adoration resembles worship; it is an effect which partly allegorizes the relation between the actor and the director, who is the actor's ideal audience.

It is this specifically cinematic veneration before a Garbo-like photogénic close-up, I would argue, which circumscribes the double aspect of M's lyrical and pseudo-religious yearning. Erik Tonning locates this blend of romantic and religious longing in the German Romantic term 'sehnsucht', a word which 'connotes exacerbated, overwhelming emotion in conjunction with an idealised, unattainable object of yearning', and which includes the double aspect both of 'a lost or impossible love' and a 'yearning for the infinite'.[45] Beckett was familiar with the concept of 'sehnsucht' through his reading of the courtly love poetry of the eleventh- and twelfth-century Provençale troubadour poets, where 'the lover is the servant and vassal of the Lady, and must obey her every whim and bear all rebukes uncomplainingly',[46] and of Dante, 'who elevates his Beatrice to a heavenly status'.[47] In Beckett's drama, the force of this unattainable yearning often takes the form of an obsessive fascination with the appearance of a face. Krapp's 'sehnsucht' pivots around his fixation with the woman's face in the punt, which he edits and replays with morbid fascination: 'I asked her to look at me and after a few moments – [*Pause*] – after a few moments she did' (221). Graley Herren argues that 'as so often in both Yeats and Beckett, the image summoned of the woman takes the form of a haunting face',[48] pointing out an allusion to *The Tower* in *Words and Music*: 'In the tower. [*Pause.*] The face. [*Long pause.*] Theme tonight…. [Pause.] Theme tonight … love' (288). But what is unique in *… but the clouds …* is Beckett's re-framing and critique of the Yeatsian operations of 'sehnsucht' in specifically cinematic terms: the director stages the perfect semblance in photogénic close-up as an allegory of M's yearning for the unattainable face of a muse-like figure.

According to Gontarski, 'in structure the teleplay runs almost parallel to that of Yeats' poem, in which Yeats reviews images from his past work, both real people from the Tower neighborhood and his own creations'.[49] The film tacitly acknowledges the question Yeats asks in *… but the clouds …*: 'Does the imagination dwell the most/Upon a woman won or a woman lost?'[50] In *The Tower* the speaker

[45] Erik Tonning, *Beckett's Abstract Drama: Works for Stage and Screen, 1962–1985* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), 180, 182.
[46] Ibid., 194.
[47] Ibid., 199.
[48] Herren, *Samuel Beckett's Plays*, 107.
[49] Gontarski, *Intent of Undoing*, 126.
[50] W.B. Yeats, 'The Tower', in ed. Richard J. Finneran, *Collected Poems* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 113–114.

is 'lured by a softening eye,/Or by a touch or a sigh,/Into the labyrinth of another's being', finding 'an answer in those eyes' to 'rise,/Dream and so create/Translunar Paradise'.[51] But the Yeatsian figure's elevation to an ideal state of 'translunar paradise' is conditional upon the effacement of the muse figure's agency. As Jahan Ramazani argues, Yeatsian elegy which addresses the absent female muse depends upon and reinforces 'older male traditions that define "woman" as the silent, absent referent'.[52] Beckett clearly mistrusted these elements in Yeats. Tonning points to his 1934 essay 'Recent Irish Poetry' where Beckett mocks the 'cut-and-dried sanctity and loveliness' and the elevation of 'the stuff of song as incorruptible, uninjurable and unchangeable'.[53] What Beckett stages in … *but the clouds* … is an unanswering gaze, and the failure to find redemption in the muse-inspired imagination; the lingering image of W, sustained for mere seconds at a time, neither sees nor acknowledges M, who finds no 'answer in those eyes'.

Beckett had already offered a critique of the Yeatsian poetic imagination in *Eh Joe,* where the vengeful female voice reduces the male listening figure Joe to silent referent. In … *but the clouds* …, the notion of a muse-like woman as silent referent is complicated by the image of W, who paradoxically both speaks and is silent. This paradox, which extends the critique of Yeats, is articulated in a cinematic image which harks back to silent film. As Enoch Brater points out, 'it is difficult to tell […] if image imitates words, or words imitate image: which illustrates which?' If the former, M's miming of W's words serves as a ventriloquial assertion of his authorial mastery over his silent muse. But an early typescript, where W speaks in her own voice, suggests that the words are her own;[54] if one understands the provenance of the image in silent film, it is rather W who takes the lead, as author of what she speaks: all figures in silent film are both inaudible yet speak for themselves. In this sense, the film stages W's resistance to authorial appropriation or ventriloquy, and M's status as mere spectator, passively repeating words which are her own rather than his.

Billie Whitelaw described the working collaboration between her and Beckett as one of mutually devoted admiration, and has compared her partnership to 'one of the most fruitful and famous partnerships in movies, that of Marlene Dietrich and Joseph von Sternberg, which is so often quoted in film histories, [and]in fact only lasted six years'.[55] Here, Whitelaw hints at a potentially

[51] Ibid., 114.

[52] John Ramazani, *Yeats and the Poetry of Death: Elegy, Self Elegy, and the Sublime* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 18; quoted in Herren, *Samuel Beckett's Plays*, 62.

[53] Tonning, *Beckett's Abstract Drama*, 190.

[54] Knowlson, *Images of Beckett*, 114.

[55] Whitelaw, *Who He?*, 218.

instructive comparison: Von Sternberg and Dietrich's films frequently stage the resistance of a muse-like figure to appropriation by a male gaze, as an allegory of the relation between the director and the image of the actor. Von Sternberg's envisagement of iconic back lit close-ups of Dietrich's face approach, as Deleuze puts it, the level of 'lyrical abstraction',[56] becoming autonomous units in themselves, independent from and in excess to the film's narrative requirements: Dietrich's face becomes, as Laura Mulvey puts it, 'the content of the film and the direct recipient of the spectator's look'.[57] In the key Von Sternberg-Dietrich films of the 1930s, the autonomy of the close-ups, apparently detached from narrative continuity, often articulate her characters' claims to autonomy from their various obsessive romantic liaisons. Films such as *Blonde Venus* (1932) or *Morocco* (1930) 'situate Dietrich in erotic and amorous situations where she is challenged to move beyond the limits of a given situation and claim autonomy against the odds of a hostile environment'[58] to maintain her agency in the midst of successive attempts to appropriate her in otherwise standard marriage narratives. By developing a careful working relationship between himself as director and Dietrich, von Sternberg was able to articulate a complex, often ironic attitude to romantic love and the female subject by foregrounding the attitude of distanced formality, controlling the gaze and enabling the image to achieve a level of autonomy and independence.

Dietrich, as with Whitelaw, was no passive or silent muse for her director: Whitelaw's characterization of her relationship with Beckett as 'like a marriage' implies a level of equality, autonomy and creative agency which contests the common view of Beckett as a dictator figure exerting his will on straightforwardly obedient actors. The allegory of the relationship in … *but the clouds* … is located precisely in a back-and-forth structure of resistance to and autonomy from obsessive attempts at male mastery and ownership. In this sense, the pro-filmic event foregrounds the documentary aspect of the complex working relationship between director and actor. Modernist filmmakers, such as Rosselini, Antonioni, Resnais and Godard each made films where the fictional story of a relationship is also the documentary of the power dynamics of a real relationship between director and actor. These are films which interrogate both the fictional subject and the conditions of the director-actor relation, where the latter deepens and complicates the former. The peculiar intensity of films such

[56] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Athlone Press, 1983), 103.

[57] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), 113.

[58] Reidar Due, *Love in Motion: Erotic Relationships in Film* (New York: Wallflower Press, 2013), 14.

as Antonioni's *L'Eclisse* (1962) and Rosselini's *Voyage to Italy,* films which chart the disintegration of a relationship, is enhanced by the pro-filmic aspect of the real relationship between director and lead actor. In the final scene in *L'Eclisse*, an abstracted hybrid consciousness of the director and male lead, Piero (Alain Delon), returns to the film's various locations, retracing steps, searching in vain for the absent lover, Vittoria, played by Monica Vitti, who was also Antonioni's real-life lover and long-standing collaborator. The sense of intimacy in Rosselini's *Voyage to Italy,* an adaptation of Joyce's 'The Dead', which charts the breakdown of a marriage, is partly an aspect of Rosselini's complex relation to Ingrid Bergman, the female lead, with whom he had an affair and then married once her previous marriage had ended. The initial encounter between the man and the woman in *Marienbad* – he saw her perform on stage in an Ibsen play the previous year – re-stages Resnais' first encounter with Delphine Seyrig: he first saw her performing in an Ibsen play in New York. The man's attempt to narrate her actions as a series of rigid, statuesque gestures partially ventriloquises Resnais' directorial instructions to Seyrig; the resistance of Seyrig's character to the formal, plastic, sculptural demands made upon her by the man is also Seyrig the Method actor's resistance to being denied a psychological history. The impersonal anti-naturalism Resnais insisted upon was the antithesis to the expressive-realist style of Hollywood acting with its search for motive and agency: Delphine Seyrig trained in the Method with Lee Strasberg, according to the guiding principles of character, psychological history and motive. The rigid, statuesque acting style demanded of her is counteracted by flight-like poise, and charged moments of improvisation, which resist the attempt at depersonalization and the imposition of form.

In Godard's *Vivre Sa Vie*, the pro-filmic situation – a man, Godard, is filming his wife, Anna Karina – is also the film's subject, as exemplified in *The Oval Portrait* scene, where Godard narrates, in his own voice, the story of an artist painting his wife's portrait, who later discovers that she has died on its completion; the mortification of the living person into a mere semblance or artificial proxy is also a central idea in … *but the clouds* … M's fixation is not with W in her independent life but with the artificial image of her; his desire for closeness to her is also paradoxically a desire to transfix her in a distant and unattainable image. Again, the Yeatsian misogynistic notion of the silent female interlocutor, as Graley Herren argues, is latently active in … *but the clouds*…In poems such as 'He Wishes his Beloved were Dead', the speaker bids the female to 'come hither, and bend your head,/And I would lay my head on your breast;/And you would murmur tender words,/Forgiving me, because

you were dead/Nor would you rise and hasten away,/Though you have the will of the wild birds'.[59] In her life she resisted mastery, but in death she becomes ideally fixed and prolonged in the artifice of a poetic afterlife. As Ramazani puts it, 'the poem shows us that it must "kill" the beloved as natural image in order to transfigure her into a divine principle of the imagination'.[60] Again, I would argue that Beckett re-frames this poetic conceit – the morbid desire for the extinction of the beloved, followed by her resurrection as a ghost-like image – into its cinematic equivalent. In this respect, … *but the clouds* … bears comparison with Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958), a film at the centre of the nouvelle vague's re-discovery of Hitchcock, and the very greatest cinematic exploration and critique of this morbid conceit. As with *Psycho,* there is no evidence that Beckett saw *Vertigo*, though Billie Whitelaw worked with Hitchcock in 1972, playing the character of Hetty Porter in *Frenzy.* In her account, Hitchcock had 'specifically asked for me for a part in his film *Frenzy* […] Here was yet another notorious monster (to judge by books published after his death) with whom I got on like a house on fire'.[61]

In *Rear Window* (1954), the story of an immobile photographer watching the windows of the apartment building allegorizes the cinematic apparatus, particularly the voyeuristic situation of the film spectator; whereas *Vertigo,* which takes as its central conceit the obsessive desire to re-create the idealized image of a dead woman, stages the pro-filmic relation between the director and actor as an aspect of its diegesis. As Susan White points out, *Vertigo* is simultaneously 'a tale of male aggression and visual control […] a deconstruction of the male construction of femininity and of masculinity itself […] and a stripping bare of the mechanisms of directorial, Hollywood studio […] oppression'.[62] Scottie (James Stewart) is stricken with severe vertigo after seeing a man fall to his death. An old friend (Elster) hires him as a private investigator to follow his wife, Madeleine (Kim Novak). She is apparently possessed by the ghost of an ancestor who committed suicide and Elster fears Madeleine will do the same. Scottie falls desperately in love with the distant, death-obsessed Madeleine, but his vertigo prevents him from intervening to stop her falling to her death from a church bell tower. In a state of deep trauma, he begins methodically to visit the same locations that he and Madeleine had frequented, in an attempt, as with M, to bring back her ghost. During these visits, as he 'walks the roads'

[59] Quoted in Herren, *Samuel Beckett's Plays*, 106, 3–8.
[60] Ramazani, *Yeats and the Poetry of Death*, 23.
[61] Whitelaw, *Who He?,* 206.
[62] Susan White, 'Vertigo and Problems of Knowledge in Feminist Film Theory', in eds Richard Allen and S. Ishi Gonzales, *Alfred Hitchcock: Centenary Essays* (London: British Film Institute, 1999), 279.

(420), he sees a woman, Judy, who bears a striking resemblance to Madeleine. Scottie seduces her and then begs her to appear as Madeleine, dressing her in Madeleine's clothes, dyeing her hair, fashioning her in the image of his lost love. After returning to the same locations, they end up in a hotel room; she emerges from the bathroom bathed in green light as 'Madeleine' and Scottie thinks he has succeeded in re-animating his lost love; he soon realizes he has been tricked by Elster, that Madeleine, played by Judy, was in fact a counterfeit image all along, hired by Elster to pretend to be his wife so he could murder his real wife.

For Laura Mulvey, 'the look is central to the plot, oscillating between voyeurism and fetishistic fascination': it is signalled by the extreme close-up of Kim Novak's right eye in the credit sequence – an image which rhymes with the close-up of Buster Keaton's eye in the opening shot of Beckett's *Film* – and is then developed throughout the course of the film by forcing the spectator to identify with Scottie's 'active sadistic voyeurism', to share and become complicit in his predatory gaze. Mulvey defines the 'active/looking, passive/looked-at split in terms of sexual difference and the power of the male symbolic encapsulated in the hero': Scottie's obsessive, fascinated gaze reifies Madeleine into a fetishistic image which he then tries to re-create after her 'death'.[63] She makes her first appearance in a scene in a restaurant, while Scottie watches her intently from another table as she walks into a close-up profile shot. The lighting changes for an instant, isolating her face from her environment, holding her profile in relief against the background. The altered lighting deliberately gives the background the textured surface appearance of an oil painting. The two shots, Novak in profile and Stewart looking are cut together unexpectedly: in the shot which follows the pictorial close-up, Stewart appears to have his back turned to Novak. As he does not look directly at her, the shot suggests that what we see is not Madeleine but her transformation into an image, shaped by Scottie's fantasy, depicted in the idealizing conventions of portraiture. The parallel between painting and cinematography is further extended in scenes where he watches Madeleine looking at the portrait of her dead relative Carlotta in the art gallery; the living and the dead are both incarnated in artificial images in which the conventions for representing a female subject are caught up in the mortification of the male gaze. As in … *but the clouds* …, the male subject's

[63] Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', 114. See also William Rothman, 'Vertigo: The Unknown Woman in Hitchcock', in eds Joseph H. Smith and William Kerrigan, *Images in Our Souls: Cavell, Psychoanalysis, and Cinema* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 64–81; Karen Hollinger, 'The Look, Narrativity, and the Female Spectator in *Vertigo*', *Journal of Film and Video* 39.4 (1987), 22; Virginia Wright Wexman, 'The Critic as Consumer: Film Study in the University, *Vertigo*, and the Film Canon', *Film Quarterly* 39.3 (1986), 34.

relation is not with a woman but with the image of a woman; the death of the woman and then her appearance as an apparition, re-animated by the man's controlling gaze, are an aspect of her imageness.

This relation between male gaze and female subject allegorizes, as critics have observed, Hitchcock's 'directorial drive towards controlling his leading ladies' and 'the industry-wide phenomenon of manipulation and control of the female star'. Kim Novak's persona as a 'manufactured romantic idol', together with 'the control exercised by an individual director-auteur over his star',[64] constitutes the power of the pro-filmic event in *Vertigo*. As David Sterrit argues, 'Scottie has taken on the persona – without realizing it himself, at first – of a Pygmalion, a creator (or at least a molder) of human flesh, personality, and possibility. More specifically, he has become a director or a filmmaker, hunting for the proper "actress" to "cast" in the "production" that he has unconsciously conceived.'[65] When she finally makes an entrance in Madeleine's clothes and make-up, Scottie observes a discrepancy with her hair. Like a film director noticing the mistake, he asks for a second take: she fixes her hair and emerges from the bathroom as the identical image of Madeleine. M in … *but the clouds* … also behaves like a director, repeating scenes with minor variations as he attempts to get the detail of each shot exactly right; M's crouched position as he imagines the action we see strongly suggests, as Erik Tonning points out, Beckett's own 'painstaking struggles to reproduce on stage the patterns and images in his head as exactly as possible (often working against rather than with strong-willed actors)'.[66] The film opens with the imagined re-take of W's entrance: 'When I thought of her it was always night […] No, that is not right. When she appeared it was always night' (419); his direction of M1's movements across the screen – emerging from the west shadow, standing facing the east shadow before disappearing, emerging from the east shadow, standing facing west shadow, disappearing in the north shadow – are interspersed with signals appealing to a directorial standard of correctness: 'Let us now make sure we have got it right' (419), followed by the repetition of 'Right' after each run through of the action. M mentally recalls in order to re-enact a younger version of himself, M1; like Scottie obsessively returning to the same sites – the graveyard, the art gallery, the bell tower – he visited when Madeleine was alive, often thinking he sees her before he encounters Judy, M is driven by a similar repetition compulsion, seeking to return to the earlier version of himself by re-enacting the same movements at the same locations when 'she'

[64] Wexman, 'The Critic as Consumer', 34.
[65] David Sterrit, *The Films of Alfred Hitchcock* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 97.
[66] Tonning, *Beckett's Abstract Drama*, 176.

would appear to him. By re-staging the past in all its detail, like Scottie, he hopes to re-animate the ghost of his beloved. M is able to summon W's image at will to an extent: she appears eight times on his direction. But far more often than not, he is unable to control the image, just as Scottie is finally unable to prevent Judy/Madeleine from falling to her death for a second time.

… but the clouds … stages the pro-filmic relations between Beckett and Whitelaw and foregrounds their long-standing working methods and rehearsal process as an aspect of its form. Like Scottie in *Vertigo* – partly a fictionalized version of Hitchcock, who directed actors so as to conform exactly to meticulously designed storyboards – M's attempt to 'direct' W suggests an allegory of Beckett's directorial method with Whitelaw. W's silent mouthing of words M speaks in synchrony with her lips echoes the line-readings Beckett often practised with Whitelaw, to establish the exact intonation, 'the voice that he heard in his head'[67]: Beckett would sit with her and 'read through an entire passage himself to illustrate exactly how he thought it should be delivered'.[68] This method was not successful with other actors; Brenda Bruce, playing Winnie in the British premiere of *Happy Days*, reacted with 'horror'[69] at Beckett's strict rhythmic delivery and tonelessness, as did Peggy Ashcroft, who played Winnie in the 1974 National Theatre production: 'he made himself deeply unpopular with the actress'.[70] But as late as 1981, by which time he had stopped working directly with her, he assisted Whitelaw with the production of *Rockaby* by reading her lines over the telephone to her.[71]

… but the clouds … partly re-stages for the screen the situation in *Footfalls*: the obsessional repetition of episodes from the past by a character possessed by the memory of the dead, 'revolving it all' in her head. In a 1975 letter from Beckett to Whitelaw, he made it clear in his discussion of *Footfalls* that it was a 'play I have written for you'.[72] In her account of Beckett's 1976 Royal Court production, Whitelaw emphasizes a Pygmalion-like, or Hitchcockian effect in Beckett's directorial method:

> Sometimes I felt as if he were a sculptor and I a piece of clay. At other times I might be a piece of marble that he needed to chip away at. He would endlessly move my arms and my head in a certain way, to get closer to the precise image in his mind. I didn't object to him doing this. As this went on, hour after hour,

[67] Knowlson, *Images of Beckett*, 113.
[68] Ibid., 101.
[69] Ibid., 109.
[70] Ibid., 111.
[71] The recording is in the Beckett International Foundation archive at Reading University.
[72] Beckett to Billie Whitelaw, 29 December 1975 BW B.1.7, Beckett International Foundation: Reading University Library.

> I could feel the 'shape' taking on a life of its own. Sometimes it felt as if I were modelling for a painter, or working with a musician […] Beckett moved my fingers, perhaps no more than half an inch this way or that, then he would stand back. If it didn't feel quite right he would correct the pose. Strangely enough, this didn't restrict me at all.[73]

Delphine Seyrig described a similar effect when Beckett directed her in *Footfalls* at the Théâtre d'Orsay. She compared his work to that of a sculptor, shaping her body, finding the right position for her head, her hands; her task, to memorize with maximum concentration the tension of every muscle, to hold her body stiffly, and avoid uncalculated movement and the search for inner motivation:

> Psychology, state of mind, emotions – for me, that's the abstract part of Beckett's music and theatre […] Sam doesn't try to explain what the play means – the invisible part of the play […] He is like an orchestra: he sets the tempo […] It's a concrete, real kind of work that is quite distinct from the question of interpretation.[74]

May's posture during her pacing was central to the writing of her character, and it became, in performance, like a Biomechanical stimulus for her voice: 'Beckett used to stand with his arms crossed like this […] If you grip your arms and you have a fixed physical point here where you hold yourself together more or less, you can speak rather easily and sharp […] It's a technical thing which of course doesn't give the actress any inner motivation.'[75]

Seyrig was familiar with the technique from her work with Resnais on *Marienbad*. Robbe-Grillet remarked of the film's inconsistencies, doubts and phantasms:

> The questions you were most likely to ask yourself were: did this man and this woman really meet and fall in love last year at Marienbad? Does the young woman remember and merely pretend not to recognise the stranger? Or has she indeed forgotten everything that has passed between them? Let's get one thing straight: these questions have no meaning.[76]

Resnais' and Robbe-Grillet's anti-psychological technique chimes with Beckett's technique as a director, his refusal to discuss the inner upheavals and confusions

[73] Whitelaw, *Who He?*, 144.

[74] Interview with Delphine Seyrig, in Linda Ben-Zvi, ed., *Women in Beckett: Performance and Critical Perspectives* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 79.

[75] Interview with Walter Asmus, ibid, 181.

[76] Quoted in Jean-Louis Leutrat, *Last Year At Marienbad*, trans. Paul Hammond (London: BFI Publishing, 2000), 27.

of his characters, and the use of a rigid form to preserve radical indeterminacy. Beckett would 'look forward to working with Delphine Seyrig'.[77] Seyrig and Whitelaw were 'two of his favourite actresses'[78]; according to James Knowlson, Beckett 'admired what she had done with the role and told me two days after the premiere that he had loved working with her'.[79] As Knowlson explains, 'it is an indication of just how warmly he felt about Billie Whitelaw and Delphine Seyrig that the only contribution he even considered making to the Festival d'Automne was "to refresh Billie or Delphine in Footfalls if they are available" '.[80] By the time Beckett directed Seyrig in 1978, she had established one of the most distinctive star personas in French cinema, working with directors such as Resnais, Buñuel, Duras and Joseph Losey. Duras had declared her 'the greatest actress in France'.[81] In 1975, Chantal Akerman cast Seyrig as the lead for *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* because 'she brought with her all the roles of mythical woman that she played until now. The woman in *Marienbad*, the woman in *India Song*'. Akerman could also have added Beckett's *Comédie,* though it was much less well-known, to the list. By deploying Seyrig's 'mythical' cinematic persona in the role of an anonymous middle-aged woman, living with her teenage son in their bourgeois apartment in Paris, working as a prostitute to support him, and finally killing one of her clients, Akerman simultaneously undermines conventional naturalistic categories (mother, housewife, prostitute), and also imbues the role with a representative function. In Akerman's words, 'If I had chosen a nonprofessional actress for the role of Jeanne, she wouldn't be more than that single woman. Because she is an actress, she represents all other women'.[82] Seyrig's performance, together with her 'mythic' status, emphasizes the formalist, ritual elements of Jeanne's gestures; at the same time, the actual content of the routines serves to banalize Seyrig's persona, and to reduce the mythic to the typical or domestic.

The film largely consists of extended shots of Jeanne enacting everyday routines and gestures in meticulous detail. Ivone Margulies characterizes the film's style as 'hyperrealist', an effect generated by the film's fixation on 'extended duration' and obsessive symmetry, the camera staying fixed in a rigid frontal position as Seyrig combs her hair, puts on lipstick, polishes shoes, folds pyjamas,

[77] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 18 February 1978, Harmon, *No Author Better Served*, 365.
[78] Knowlson, *Damned to Fame,* 657.
[79] Ibid., 657.
[80] Ibid., 672.
[81] Marguerite Duras, *Outside: Selected Writings*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (London: Flamingo, 1987), 160.
[82] Chantal Akerman, 'Chantal Akerman on *Jeanne Dielman*', *Camera Obscura,* 2 (1977), 118–126; 119, 122.

peels potatoes and lays the dinner table. These radically prolonged scenes obsessively capture Seyrig in long, unedited takes and amplify her material presence, consequently highlighting the disjunction between Seyrig the actress and Jeanne Dielman the (scripted) role, between the mythic and diurnal elements of Seyrig-Dielman. For Margulies, this 'enhanced indexicality' is an aspect of the film's 'radical reconsideration of the notion of theatricality'[83]: Akerman's hyperrealism is theatrical in its insistent emphasis on the presence of the actress who is always filmed from a frontal position. In this way, Seyrig never dissolves into her role as she would in a naturalist account of the same events; by de-naturalizing her gestures, the film also does the same to female gestures in general. Although there is no record, there is a strong possibility that Akerman encountered the de-naturalized daily tasks of another bourgeois lady: Winnie in *Happy Days*.

Jeanne Dielman is consistently framed in a frontal position, facing towards the camera, like Winnie, who '*gazes front*' (155), having no alternative. The obsessively symmetrical framing of Jeanne compares with the 'maximum of simplicity and symmetry' (138) of the mise-en-scène in *Happy Days*, as does its 'unsuccessful realism'[84] with the hyperrealism of *Jeanne Dielman*. Both *Happy Days* and *Jeanne Dielman* are divided into acts which each correspond to the length of a day. In Act One, Winnie and Jeanne flawlessly demonstrate the routines which structure their day. While '[*Embedded up to above her waist*]' (138), Winnie is still able to keep herself distracted with her small-scale routines. In Act Two, while buried up to her neck, she can no longer perform the gestures which keep her anxiety at bay. Hope disappears along with the use of her hands. In the second act of *Jeanne Dielman,* Jeanne's automatic ritual gestures gradually begin to unravel after she has an orgasm with one of her clients. She begins to drop or misplace objects, she loses her rhythm, her habitual precision, and we see a quiet desperation slowly rise until it is released in the affectless murder of one of her clients. Where *Jeanne Dielman* tips over into bourgeois tragedy, *Happy Days* ends on an ambiguous pause as Willie reaches for the revolver.

The clearest resonance between Jeanne and Winnie is in the formalized yet domestic routines they enact with their hands. The way Jeanne handles objects, like Winnie, is a function of her solitude. For the vast majority of the film's 200 minutes, no other figure inhabits the frame. Seyrig performs Jeanne's aloneness through gestures and objects; like Winnie, they do more than get her

[83] Ivone Margulies, *Nothing Happens: Chantal Akerman's Hyperrealist Everyday* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 44, 54, 44.

[84] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 17 August 1961, Harmon, *No Author Better Served*, 94.

through her day, they are also her saving grace. In the kitchen, Seyrig does not so much prepare potatoes and soup on a stove as conduct each item through a choreography of hands. We observe her knitting over piano music played on the radio, in a scene which further emphasizes the musical quality of her hands as they keep time with the music. Jeanne hardly speaks throughout the film. We get to know her, just as she knows herself, through her gestures, they are what make her who she is. We see her methodically taking objects from her handbag, a letter, her spectacles, putting on her spectacles to read the letter, just as Winnie '[*Looks for spectacles*]' in her handbag, and '[*Puts on spectacles*]' (141) to read. We see Jeanne putting on lipstick in a manner reminiscent of Winnie, who '[*Takes up mirror, starts doing lips*]' (141). In both instances, the gestures are both performed and literally enacted: they really do put lipstick on their lips. Winnie does not just perform her gestures, she literally does, for instance, brush her teeth (139) or file her nails (155), just as Jeanne really does peel potatoes, wash the dishes.

Anna McMullan has drawn attention to the gendered aspect of Winnie's rituals, reading the gestures with her lipstick, nails, hair, the way she looks after her appearance – 'Keep yourself nice, Winnie' – in light of Judith Butler's influential idea of performativity. For Butler, performativity constitutes 'a reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performer and in that sense cannot be taken as the fabrication of the performer's "will" or "choice"'.[85] In this sense, gender is performative: it naturalizes, through repetition which the subject has internalized, an idea of femininity which is historically and culturally determined. The subject, as McMullan puts it, 'learns and reproduces the dominant cultural script'.[86] Winnie's performativity is not the kind of subversive performance Butler has in mind, but it has the potential, as McMullan points out, 'to expose or frame the performativity of gender roles'.[87]

Akerman spoke of giving 'space to things which were never, almost never, shown in that way, like the daily gestures of a woman'.[88] They had been shown in earlier productions of *Happy Days*, although the relation between Jeanne and Winnie is especially pronounced in Beckett's 1979 production. I would argue that Beckett's production of *Happy Days* – he directed Billie Whitelaw as Winnie at the Royal Court, London, in 1979 – by heightening the mechanized formality of Winnie's gestures through a rigorous anti-naturalism, partly influenced by

[85] Quoted in McMullan, *Performing Embodiment in Samuel Beckett's Drama* (London: Routledge, 2007), 53.
[86] Ibid., 122.
[87] Ibid., 53.
[88] Akerman, 'Chantal Akerman on *Jeanne Dielman*', 120.

his recent film work for the BBC and SDR, serves further to de-naturalize her performance by emphasizing the coded aspect of her gendered routines. The Notebooks for Beckett's production reveal substantial and minute revisions and additions to the published text, particularly to movements of the hand, which serve to formalize the domestic aspect of Winnie's gestures. In the first act, while she still has the use of her hands, Beckett added detailed sequences of gestures which embody the fastidious care in Winnie's conduct of her routines, her only hope of getting through the day. Beckett specified such details as how Whitelaw should use her finger and thumb to imitate holding the flute glass when she offers an imaginary toast, the precision with which she applauds with her fingertips, elaborated from the stage direction '*claps hands*', the manner in which she interrupts the polishing of her spectacles, and inspects her hat in the mirror.[89]

The Notebooks construct elaborate repeated patterns between her left and right hand (abbreviated to RH and LH), for instance, 'file from bag with LH, files RH […] circular up and in motion […] inspects her right hand for "Bit more human" then files LH'. For Whitelaw, these gestures were often more elaborate and difficult to perform than the speech; she spoke of getting into a 'mess with the props I had to handle […] taking a toothbrush out of my little bag, cleaning my spectacles, taking my handkerchief out of Winnie's cleavage – all had to be accurately timed, fitting not just a specific word but a specific syllable of a word'.[90] Beckett's rigorous predetermined patterns and forms created tension in the rehearsal room and greatly distressed Whitelaw; on one occasion, for the first time in their work together, she asked him to leave the rehearsal room 'to get rid of my tension'.[91] This tension, in a theatre production which would be the last time they worked together, was an aspect of an almost mechanically precise directorial style which brought Winnie's sense of being watched into close relation with Beckett's screen actors, reified by an excess of repetition, aware not of an audience but of a machine watching their performance.

As with *Ghost Trio*, Beckett would quote Kleist's essay on marionettes in rehearsals, demonstrating the extent to which the economy of gesture of the marionette ideal influenced his direction of Whitelaw. Winnie is 'not stoic, she's unaware'; she is graceful, after Kleist's marionettes, because she is unaware of her audience. In the opening scene, she is bowed forward like F in *Ghost Trio*; after the

[89] Samuel Beckett, *Happy Days: The Production Notebook of Samuel Beckett*, ed. James Knowlson (London: Faber, 1985), 93, 103, 87, 91, 105, 103, 159, 17, 189, 85.
[90] Whitelaw, *Who He?*, 151.
[91] Ibid., 153.

bell rings, she 'straightens slowly ie. hands to mound and bust vertical in a single movement'. In the text of *Happy Days*, the sense Winnie has of being observed – 'strange feeling that someone is looking at me' (155) – is partly an aspect of the play's self-conscious theatricality, and her awareness of her live performance; in Beckett's 1979 production, which was filmed for the BBC by Tristram Powell, the director of the BBC *Not I,* Beckett reduced this sense of her awareness of an audience. As Whitelaw puts it in her account, 'squatting in my mound for over two hours, and looking out at the audience, I couldn't always tell where to direct a certain line'. Beckett instructed her to shift the address away from the audience and to look 'inward'.[92] The self-absorption of Whitelaw's delivery resembles the performance style in Bresson, late Dreyer, Godard, Straub-Huillet and Akerman, where the frontal address of actors is stylized to the point where 'delivery is transformed into an almost mechanical pathway for the text'.[93]

Winnie rises marionette-like to begin her day, a reflex reaction to the sound of the bell. Beckett instructed Whitelaw to speak her first lines, 'begin your day, Winnie', with 'no colour', a flat mechanical tone, a tone which also colours her gestures as she gazes front, switches her smile on and off, moves her head back and clasps her hand in a single movement. It is a style which is strikingly close to Seyrig's deadpan, affectless performance in *Jeanne Dielman.* Whitelaw, who had met with Seyrig in Paris – 'I enjoyed exchanging memories with Delphine Seyrig, who had played *Footfalls* there'[94] – remarked of Winnie's routines; 'for me, getting through the day meant acting for a living, pretending every day to be other people, while also being a wife and mother'.[95] For Seyrig, discussing *Jeanne Dielman*, 'women accept these daily tasks are natural […] they are not natural at all [this is] the first time the film's subject matter [a woman's daily tasks] has been addressed'.[96] Seyrig's sense that Jeanne's gendered daily tasks were 'not natural at all', and Whitelaw's relation of Winnie's gestures to the sense of herself as 'acting for a living […] as wife and mother' both point to a sense of the feminine as determined by internalized codes of culturally determined behaviour.

In his production of *Happy Days*, the effect of Beckett's intensified directorial gaze serves to reify Winnie's gestures in a manner which, when viewed alongside *Jeanne Dielman*, emphasizes her constraint within coded structures of gendered performativity. As Anna McMullan has argued, by adopting the 'historically

[92] Ibid., 151–152.
[93] Margulies, *Nothing Happens,* 60.
[94] Whitelaw, *Who He?*, 241.
[95] Ibid.,149.
[96] Akerman, 'Chantal Akerman on *Jeanne Dielman*', 120.

excluded female position'[97] in plays such as *Happy Days, Not I* and *Footfalls,* Beckett adopts a '"feminized" practice', whereby the feminine represents 'the underside of power and authority, the neglected spaces and margins of representation'.[98] In his TV films, Beckett inverts the predatory male gaze of institutional cinema, its reinforcement of patriarchal structures of perception and behaviour, as exemplified in films like *Vertigo*: in *Eh Joe* and *Ghost Trio*, it is an active female voice which coldly scrutinizes or directs a passive male subject while the camera eye holds him in sight. Although she does exert directorial authority over F's actions, the female Voice in *Ghost Trio* does nevertheless permit F's small acts of resistance. As Graley Herren points out, in Part II, he goes to the mirror, without a prompt; he then goes to the stool after the instruction 'Now to door' (411), another independent act which again breaks V's total control over his actions.[99] But her reaction to the first act of rebellion – 'Ah!' (411) – expresses surprise rather than intolerance at F's act of defiance, and in the second instance she does not react at all, but rather accepts the challenge to her absolute directorial authority and control. By way of contrast, the male director figures in the later drama explicitly forbid resistance and employ coercive rigour and violence as a means to enforce their authority. As Anna McMullan has argued, 'the late plays incorporate an awareness of how access to authority is historically gendered […] Plays like *Catastrophe* or *What Where* present male authority as linked with institutionalized figures and networks of knowledge and power. Indeed, Beckett tends to portray male identified authority figures (Light, Director, Bam) as oppressive, de-humanized or de-humanizing.'[100] In *Catastrophe*, the director manipulates the passive, objectified body of the protagonist theatre actor, in order to transmit the intended effect to a live audience in the theatre, to 'have them on their feet' (461). The demands made on the protagonist, the exact position and timing of a particular gesture, as if focalized in close-up, the tightly controlled perception of the audience, suggest similarities with Beckett's own practice as a director: in this aspect, the play can be seen as a self-critique of Beckett's directorial methods and the intense formalism he demanded of his actors.

Beckett gradually withdrew from theatre directing after his 1979 production of *Happy Days*. Aside from directing *Endgame* (1980) and *Godot* (1984) at Riverside Studios, London, he declined all other offers; but he remained interested in the

[97] Anna McMullan, *Theatre on Trial: Samuel Beckett's Later Drama* (London: Routledge, 1993), 74.
[98] Ibid., 72.
[99] Herren, *Samuel Beckett's Plays*, 84.
[100] McMullan, *Performing Embodiment,* 123.

precision of filmmaking, and responded to an invitation from Reinhart Muller-Freienfels in 1984 to make another film for SDR, on the condition that he worked with cameraman Jim Lewis. In 1985, he directed a film adaptation of his 1983 stage play, *What Where*. In the original stage play, the Voice of Bam, heard through a visible megaphone, '*dimly lit, downstage left*' (470), directs the figures of Bam, Bem, Bim and Bom, each resembling the other in '*long grey gown*' and '*long grey hair*' (476), as they enter and exit the playing area. The split between the Voice of Bam and the figure of Bam in the playing area is partly explained by Beckett's suggestion that the playing area represents the 'field of memory';[101] as with M and M1 in … *but the clouds* …, Bam is possibly looking back on a past version of himself. A series of cyclical interrogations occur in the playing area, directed by Voice of Bam, who interrupts the action asking for scenes to be repeated and modified; in the playing area, Bam asks each of the other three about the attempt to torture an off-stage figure, to extract a confession, to make him say 'what' or 'where'. Each figure enters the playing area from the shadows, gives his brief account, then exits back to darkness. Bam disbelieves each of their accounts, and each figure is led away to be tortured by the other until they confess.

For the film adaptation of *Was Wo*, based on Elmar and Jonas Tophoven's German translation, Beckett substantially revised the text. The representation of Voice of Bam, the megaphone in the stage version, was replaced with a heavily distorted close-up of Bam in the top left hand corner of the screen. The full figures in the stage playing area are transformed into four smaller close-up faces, brightly lit, on the lower left of the screen, their entrances and exits replaced with fade-ups and fade-downs from darkness. As Beckett put it in his production notebook, 'Bodies & movement eliminated/Faces only/Full face throughout/Exits (simul. or sequent)/expressed by fade-outs/Entrances by fade ups'.[102] The reduction of the full-bodied figures in the play to brightly lit faces resonates with the final image in *Catastrophe*: '*Fade-out of light on body. Light on head alone*' (461). *Was Wo* brings the playing area into the zone of Bam's consciousness and memory, in a manner resembling … *but the clouds …,* while the intensified precision with which Voice directs the faces through serial patterns of framing and cutting echoes the level of control in the edited arrangement of large and small faces against a black background in the 1966 film version of *Comédie*. The serial patterns of movement, and the appearance of ghost-like figures from the

[101] Samuel Beckett, *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett, vol. 4: The Shorter Plays*, ed. S.E. Gontarski (London: Faber & Faber, 1999), n. 13, 415.
[102] Ibid., 427.

past, as directed by a voiceover, clearly recall *Ghost Trio* and … *but the clouds* …; yet unlike the two earlier films, there are no actions which are not commanded by Voice of Bam. The film, in Martha Fehsenfeld's view, fulfils cinematic tendencies already present in the playscript:

> His diagram for the arrangement of the stage – with indications for lighting, shadow, playing area, positions for Voice and the three players – was unlike any I had seen in one of his prepared texts for a play designed for the theatre, but it was very like other diagrams he had made for his television pieces: *Ghost Trio, But the Clouds, Eh Joe*; and those for *Film*, both in manuscript and published form.[103]

I would like to argue that the acousmatic Voice of Bam, as represented by the megaphone in the stage version, strongly recalls the voice from beyond the grave of Dr Mabuse, also represented by a megaphone, in Fritz Lang's *The Testament of Dr Mabuse* (1933); Beckett admired Lang, and the uncanny echoes in *What Where* suggest he had seen the film. In this sequel to Lang's silent *Dr. Mabuse the Gambler* (1922), Mabuse, the criminal mastermind and hypnotist, is committed to an asylum, dies early on in the film but continues to orchestrate his criminal operations from beyond the grave by apparently possessing the body and voice of Baum, the asylum director. After he dies, his voice is only ever heard through the megaphone, or, in one scene, emerging from a distorted close-up superimposition of a spectral face. As Michel Chion argues, silent cinema, unable to use the resources of the voice, would represent ghosts and doubles by employing superimposition; with the coming of sound, the acousmatic voice tended to supplant the use of superimposition. By combining the acousmatic voice with a ghostly superimposition, Lang's film 'executes a kind of handover or transfer of power from the superimposition to the acousmatic voice'.[104] This transition is played out in reverse in the adaptation of *What Where* from stage to screen, where the acousmatic Voice of Bam is transformed into a spectral close-up of a face.

After he dies, Mabuse is transformed into a disembodied voice, heard initially from behind an opaque curtain lit with overhead lights in an otherwise empty room reminiscent of a stage space. The voice of Mabuse dictates to his four henchmen, named Division 3, the precise details and movements of their operation. One of the henchmen, Kent, is not fully committed to the operation and he arouses the suspicion of the other three. In one scene, the three are framed

[103] Martha Fehsenfeld, 'Everything But The Faces', *Modern Drama*, 29.2 (1986), 229–240; 230.
[104] Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, 137.

standing in a row in front of the curtain, each one stepping forward to give their report to Mabuse; as the voice from behind the curtain, like Bam in *What Where,* asks them a series of questions aimed at exposing Kent's treachery, each figure takes one step forward to speak – to which Mabuse, like Voice of Bam, replies 'Good' (471) – before returning to the row, in the manner of the B-ms in the stage play. In a later scene, Kent tears down the curtain to unmask Mabuse, but discovers only a megaphone, apparently conveying the voice from elsewhere. As with Voice of Bam in the stage version, the disembodied voice, apparently from 'beyond the grave'[105] – Beckett's own description of Voice of Bam – is made visible through a megaphone which is apparently all-seeing. The voice, it is later revealed, is Baum's, broadcast from another location; the voice of Mabuse is in fact the voice of another figure, and this twofold detachment of voice from body echoes the split between Voice of Bam and Bam, two components of a potentially singular figure, in *What Where*. Yet Lang's film does not explain how Baum/Mabuse is able directly to address the figures in front of the curtain, as though he were able to see them. In this respect, the film asks the two questions which also structure the actions in Beckett's play. The 'what' of a mysteriously ubiquitous voice, apparently belonging to a dead figure and able to see without a body, and the 'where' of a figure, Baum, speaking from another location while able to broadcast his voice, apparently live and without pre-recording, from behind the curtain.

There are further striking parallels between *Was Wo* and a scene in *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* which depicts the ghost of Mabuse hypnotizing and entering the body of Baum. Sitting in his office, Baum reads Mabuse's notebook, the 'script' for his criminal operators which gives precise instructions for a series of actions to be conveyed to his henchmen. A series of close-ups of human skulls and death-masks in Baum's office recall Beckett's suggestion that Voice of Bam's face should be like a 'death-mask'.[106] As we hear Baum's voice reading, the camera tracks into his face; while his lips remain closed throughout, we hear Mabuse's voice replace Baum's in a low whisper as he continues reading from the notebooks. The flat, mechanical sound of Mabuse's voice echoes the 'remote, somewhat mechnical'[107] effect Beckett sought for the Voice of Bam. The scene in Lang's film then cuts to the body of Mabuse, seen in a chair opposite Baum in ghostly superimposition, followed by a close-up of his face, unblinking, heavily distorted, mask-like, and closely resembling the Voice of Bam in *Was Wo*.

[105] Fehsenfeld, 'Everything But The Faces', 233.
[106] Ibid., 236.
[107] Ibid., 238.

The acousmatic voice, suddenly located in the ghost-like death-mask of Mabuse, parallels the movement of the Voice of Bam in its transformation from the voiceover in the stage version to the 'blurred and softened outline', the 'vague sort of distorted image'[108] of the face in *Was Wo*, created, as Jim Lewis explains, using a mirror-reflected image and lens gauze. In both films, the combination of a mechanical voice with a distorted close-up creates the spectral effect of a face from beyond the grave: as Jim Lewis put it, 'what you see is not there'.[109] The scene in Lang ends with three separate superimpositions of Mabuse's ghost appearing, before they each fade away to the sound of drums; though the idea was abandoned, Beckett originally suggested, as Jim Lewis explains, 'a drum or some kind of percussion'[110] to signal the entrances and exits in *Was Wo.*

Beckett substantially revised the text for *Was Wo*, and these changes, made specifically for the film adaptation, were incorporated into the productions of the play by Pierre Chabert in Paris, 1986, and S.E. Gontarski in San Francisco, 1987. Chabert's *Quoi Ou,* which replaces the megaphone with an 'artificial circle of orange light at stage right to "hold" and "represent" Voice', and transforms the four figures into 'heads suspended in space',[111] clearly signals the powerful influence Beckett's filmmaking continued to exert on his stage practice in his final decade. The puppet-like level of precision and control in the developing vision of *What Where* resonates with Beckett's revised directorial vision for *Come and Go* in 1981. He told Alan Schneider: 'I see Come & Go very formal. Strictly identical attitudes & movements. The getting up, going, return, sitting, whispered confidence, shocked reaction (sole colour), finger to lips, etc. the same for all 3. Absent one not wholly invisible. Same toneless voices save for "Oh!'s. Stiff, slow, puppet-like"'.[112] Beckett's final productions are characterized by a level of mechanical control derived from his undimmed interest in the purity of the cinematic image. *Quad 1 and II* consist of a single wordless image: hooded figures move with perfectly timed geometrical precision across a quadrangle, repeating the same fixed course without touching each other. Beckett came increasingly to favour the power and clarity of a single image over verbal description. As he put it:

> the image of a knife is more accurate than the word knife […] 'knife' has no meaning, it's a blurred image. You have to say 'butcher's knife', 'kitchen knife'

[108] Ibid., 234.
[109] Ibid., 232.
[110] Ibid., 237.
[111] Enoch Brater, *Beyond Minimalism: Beckett's Late Style in the Theater* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 164.
[112] Beckett to Alan Schneider, 11 December 1981, Harmon, *No Author Better Served*, 417.

> 'a knife to cut the bread' so that the word takes some meaning. But when it is shown, you see at once what kind of knife it is: the image is then stronger than the word.[113]

Beckett's profound sense of the precision and truthfulness of the image, as distinct from the word, is exemplified in his final television film, *Nacht und Träume*, which he wrote and directed in 1982. Broadcast by Süddeutscher Rundfunk in 1983, the film's exclusive focus on silent images and hand gestures undoes the relationship between word and image: in the absence of audible speech, iconic gestures both 'speak' and are silent. 'Dreamer (A)' is seated at a table in right profile, his 'head bowed', his 'hands resting on table'; light fades down on A, he remains dimly visible as he sinks into dream. B, 'his dreamt self', fades up in the top right of the frame, in left profile, in the 'same posture as A'. His 'Dreamt hands R (right) and L (left)' then appear from the 'dark beyond'. L appears and 'rests gently' on B's head, withdraws, disappears; R then 'appears with a cup, conveys it gently to B's lips', B drinks, R withdraws. R reappears 'with a cloth, wipes gently B's brow', disappears (465). B 'raises his head further to gaze up at invisible face'. He raises his right hand and holds it 'palm upward'; R appears again and 'rests gently on B's right hand', B then raises his left hand and 'rests it on joined hands'. The hands 'together sink to table and on them B's head'. L reappears and 'rests gently on B's head', after which the dream fades out. Light fades up on Dreamer, A, and the whole sequence is repeated 'in close-up and slower motion' (466).

Before Beckett began work as a director, he remarked that 'producers don't seem to have any sense of form in movement […] When, in a text, actions are repeated, they ought to be made unusual the first time, so that when they happen again – in exactly the same way – an audience will recognise them from before'.[114] As this book has demonstrated, Beckett's auteurist signature style is marked by the constant citation of images and gestures across the full range of his dramatic work. In *Nacht und Träume*, ideogrammatic self-citation is enclosed within a highly compressed formal structure. The doubling of dreamer and dreamt self recalls the split-selves in *Film, Eh Joe* and the television adaptation of *Krapp's Last Tape*. The figure of A seated at his table cites Krapp at his desk, and the two figures in *Ohio Impromptu*; his bowed head alludes again to Krapp, to F in *Ghost Trio*, and to Winnie in *Happy Days*. While reminiscing about the production of *Film*, he told André Bernold, in 1980, about his fondness for the hands of the old

[113] Knowlson, *Images of Beckett,* 49.

[114] Beckett to Charles Marowitz, Encore, March–April 1962, quoted in McMillan and Fehsenfeld, *Beckett in the Theatre*, 44.

lady on the stairs, and how Buster Keaton's 'beautiful' hands were 'his only good memory of the shoot'; he then spoke of his plans to produce a work consisting only of 'photogenic' close-ups of hands:[115] this focus on hand gestures, and their recollection of other hand gestures in Beckett, enables self-citation in *Nacht und Träume* to achieve an intensity of cinematic effect. It is a method which bears comparison with the extreme reduction of action to synecdochic hand gestures in Robert Bresson.

In the same year as the broadcast of *Nacht und Träume,* Robert Bresson released his final film, *L'Argent* (1983), a film in which recurrent close-ups of hand gestures similarly allude to his own previous films, especially *Pickpocket* (1959). In *L'Argent,* Yvon is falsely accused of circulating counterfeit money and is imprisoned after inadvertently using a forged banknote as payment in a restaurant. The film is narrated through a cumulative series of close-ups of his hands: the first shot of Yvon is of his hands, where they are, as Rachel Moore observes, 'more like independent things than part of his body';[116] the corrupt note is passed on from hand to hand; the attack in the restaurant is presented as a close-up of Yvon's hand grabbing the owner and pushing him away; we hear the sound of the owner falling but the camera lingers instead on Yvon's hand, as if it had just thrown a pair of dice. This sense of fate is conveyed through the formal logic of gestures which acquire their own independent momentum, as though Yvon were at their mercy. On his release from prison, he is led into theft and then murder and becomes a victim of the independent logic of his past gestures. Towards the end, his disembodied, axe-wielding hands break into the hotel owners' flat; as he walks down the stairs, having just murdered them, we see his bloodied hand enter the frame; in the final shot, he sits at a table, staring at his hands as though they belonged to someone else.

The Bressonian image, as with Beckett, is characterized by extreme scenic fragmentation, and the visual reduction of action or narrative information to its 'essential gesture, and not the environment in which it is performed'.[117] The way Yvon's gestures behave with a logic of their own – they are at the mercy of the film's form, its arrangement of images in a particular order – recalls a remark Bresson made about *Pickpocket*, in an interview with Godard and Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, that the film is an 'adventure of Michel's [the protagonist's] hands which drag their proprietor into the adventure in theft. In time, they drag

[115] André Bernold, *L'Amitié de Beckett: 1979–1989* (Paris: Hermann, 1992), 73.
[116] Rachel Moore, *Savage Theory: Cinema as Modern Magic* (Durham: Duke University Press), 113.
[117] Susan Sontag, 'Spiritual Style in the Films of Robert Bresson', *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Picador, 1966), 57.

him further, beyond theft to the inner adventure, the adventure of the soul.'[118] We observe Michel learning the rigorous, patient craft of the pickpocket, in a series of exercises which are repeated until they become automatic, until his hands develop an automatic, unconscious will of their own. Michel's motive is kept deliberately opaque through the film; it is never clear why he behaves as he does, just as it is unclear why Yvon finally resorts to real crime after being falsely accused of handling the forged note. The deliberate withholding of psychology invites a comparison with Beckett's refusal to explain the cause of an action. Both Beckett and Bresson develop, in place of psychological causality, a rigorous formal structure of gestures which allow for multiple interpretations. In one aspect, Michel's close-up gestures, channelling an unconscious process over which he has no control, suggest Freudian parapraxis. The hidden secret to the gestures, as Louis Malle suggests, is 'erotic', as exemplified in the 'orgy of pickpocketing' in the Gare de Lyon scene,[119] which rapidly cuts between dizzyingly choreographed shots of hands entering pockets, filmed with what Bresson called 'ejaculatory force'. Yet the scene is accompanied by sacred music by Lulli, suggesting an alternative, religious perspective in which Michel's hands drive him, beyond his free will, towards a punishment that is a precondition for grace. Paul Schraeder argues that 'at the close of *Pickpocket* Michel comes to an acceptance of grace'; Richard Roud views the film as 'an allegory of redemption'.[120] Michel's automatic gestures, like the gestures of Fontaine in *A Man Escaped* – repeating exercises until his hands operate with an automatic will of their own, shaping tools which allow him to pick handcuffs, locks and eventually to escape from prison – lead towards salvation through grace, through freedom for Fontaine, through imprisonment for Michel. But these are only implied meanings: all that can be stated categorically is the relationship between the images and gestures, in themselves inexpressive, neutral, and the totality of their arrangement as elements in a relational system.

In *Nacht und Träume,* the sequence in which a disembodied hand rests on B's head, followed by the other hand, which offers him a cup of water, and then a cloth to wipe his brow, closely resembles the opening sequence of Bresson's *Au Hazard Balthazar* (1966), in which a hand enters the frame to stroke the head of the central character, Balthazar, a donkey. In the following scene, the baptism of Balthazar, Bresson avoids a wide shot in favour of a series of close-ups; the hand of the boy pouring water from a cup onto Balthazzar's head, the girl's hands

[118] James Quandt, ed., *Robert Bresson* (Toronto: Cinémathèque Ontario, 1998), 175.
[119] Keith Reader, *Robert Bresson* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 54.
[120] Quandt, ed., *Robert Bresson*, 457.

holding the candle and cup, the boy's hand lifting salt to Balthazzar's mouth. In both films, sacred ritual is reduced to essential gestures made with the hands. The redemptive quality of the hand gestures in *Nacht und Träume* echoes Beckett's remark after seeing the actor Michael Dolan in 1924, in T.C. Murray's *Autumn Fire*: his hand gestures signalled the character's redemption when 'as a man who was maimed and stricken', he had 'all these tragic occurrences falling upon him'.[121] The sacred aspect of the gestures in *Nacht und Träume*, particularly the communal prayer in the joined hands of B and L, also resonate with other photogénic gestures of prayer in Beckett's work. In the scene in *Film* of Keaton's close-up hands inspecting photographs of himself, the second photo shows O as a child, with his mother beside him, his hands clasped in prayer. The photo is partly autobiographical: a similar photo of Beckett as a three year old shows him in an identical position, his hands joined in prayer, his mother beside him. James Knowlson also points out the reproduction of a Dürer etching of hands in prayer, as displayed in Beckett's childhood bedroom at his home at Cooldrinagh.[122]

As Beckett explained to the cameraman, Jim Lewis, the cloth which wipes B's brow in *Nacht und Träume* 'alluded to the veil that Veronica used to wipe the brow of Jesus on the Way of the Cross. The imprint of Christ's face remains on the cross.'[123] Beckett initially requested that 'the sex of the hands must remain uncertain', but then changed his mind: 'I think no choice but female for the helping hands.'[124] The female hands echo the communal prayer of '*three pairs of clasped hands*' (355) in *Come and Go*, and Winnie's hands in *Happy Days* as she mimes an '*inaudible prayer*' (138). The gestures in *Nacht und Träume* are clearly inflected with a sacred aspect, but they also suggest, as with Winnie's gestures, the consolations of domestic ritual. Winnie's gestures, for instance, when she wipes her spectacles with a handkerchief, and when she drinks from a bottle of medicine, are distantly echoed in the wiping of A's brow and the offering of the cup in *Nacht und Träume*. Between the first and second act, when she is buried up to her neck, Winnie could also be dreaming of hands appearing from above to comfort her, like the hands of the child which stroke Balthazzar's head, or the hands which wipe away blood and dirt in Bresson's *Journal d'un curé de campagne* (1951), *Une Femme douce* (1969) and *Lancelot du Lac* (1974). As with *Pickpocket and L'Argent*, where opacity of motive allows for both Freudian and

[121] Bill Cunningham on Telefis Eireann radio programme, quoted in Knowlson and Pilling, *Frescoes of the Skull*, 282.

[122] Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, 682.

[123] Quoted in Kalb, *Beckett in Performance*, 254.

[124] Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, 683.

religious interpretation, the gestures in *Nacht und Träume*, on the one hand, point to the sacramental – by invoking the veil of Veronica, and acts of prayer in Beckett's other work – but in the distant recollection of Dürer's etching on Beckett's childhood bedroom wall, the photo of his hands clasped in prayer beside his mother, and Winnie's routines, they also imply domestic or maternal solace.

For Bresson, an image or gesture is 'transformed by contact' with other images or gestures: 'like the words in a dictionary, [they] have no power and value except through their position and relation.' He names this relational structure of images 'cinematographic writing',[125] a deliberate allusion to silent filmmakers and theorists such as Jean Epstein and Hugo Münsterberg. For Marcel L'Herbier, whose silent films *L'Inhumaine* (1924) and *L'Argent* (1928) were so important to Resnais and others, 'Bresson's victory is his making, for the first time, a film [Pickpocket] that is entirely a talking just as entirely a silent film'. L'Herbier's account of Bresson's aesthetic of 'hands and fingertips' might also apply to Beckett's reduction of action in *Nacht und Träume* to a constellation of archetypal gestures: both derive from the 'efficient eloquence of the silent film' and 'clearly prove that the silent film's rich heritage can no longer be rejected out of hand'.[126] Beckett told Jim Lewis, during the film's production, that 'it was difficult for him to keep writing words, without having the feeling that it was a lie';[127] in *Nacht und Träume*, which testifies to this conviction, the power and eloquence of its silent images and gestures express a truth unavailable to the word. In this respect, *Nacht und Träume* is pure cinema.

[125] Bresson, *Notes on Cinematography*, 6, 11, 33.
[126] Quoted in Quandt, *Robert Bresson*, 565–566.
[127] Kalb, *Beckett in Performance*, 98.

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